



# I Came From The Mortal World

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## Synopsis :

Our protagonist, Xu Yi, is born with a silver spoon in his mouth, able to live a happy and worriless life. However, he wasn't able to enjoy this life for long, as the revenge of his family's enemies quickly caught up to him. The enemies are much more powerful than Xu Yi; therefore, he has no choice but to be obedient. However, forbearance is not always a good policy. The enemies take advantage of his passiveness and bully him even more. These little sparks of anger have finally become an uncontrollable fury for Xu Yi, compelling him to seek revenge.

In this immortal world, where power is everything, our protagonist will have no one to count on but himself! Will he overcome all the hardships in front of him, or will this turn out to be an impossible challenge? Follow the tale of Xu Yi, as he overcomes the misfortune that his family is caught up in, and fights his way up to become a legendary warrior in 'I Came From The Mortal World'.

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<http://www.novelupdates.com/series/i-came-from-the-mortal-world/>

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# Chapter One - As Weak As An Ant

As one followed a trail down the Hui Yin Mountain, they would reach the Evil Dragon River, which in turn flowed, day and night, along the Xu Village.

It was in August, the weather was already a little bit cold but the flora was still flourishing. Under an aged Chinese parasol, a group of villagers were attentively listening to a speech delivered by a seemingly young man.

However, this young man was actually just a teenager. Despite the good-looking eyes and nose, he was wearing a wax-colored face, as if he was ill. As the wind was blowing wildly, the linen-made coat pressed tightly against his body, which emphasised his stalwart appearance.

To make the speech more pleasant to the ears, this 'teenager' was using two pieces of wood, made of *huang li mu* [1], as an instrument, and he was beating these two pieces against each other to create a beautiful rhythm. Then, he coughed to clear his throat, before opening his mouth.

"The beautiful soul of the Fox Goddess has gone with the wind in bits and pieces. It was only regrettable to find that the most promising student, Zhang Shen, would be forever separated from his deceased Fox Goddess. The deeper his love for the Fox Goddess became, the greater the grievance in his heart was. Owning up to the unspeakable sorrow, Zhang Shen gave up on the promising future as an official and deeply buried all of his ambitions. Eventually, he decided to withdraw from society all together and chose for a life of solitude, to meditate on life



and death... As the proverb goes: 曾经沧海难为水, 除却巫山不是云。取次花丛懒回顾, 半缘修道半缘君 (Any water is no water, after seeing the magnificent ocean; every cloud is no cloud, after seeing the splendid cloud above Wu Mountain. Walking on the path of love, I have no interest to appreciate the scenery, partly because I am a Daoism follower and partly because I already have my Mr. Right.)”

The end of the story was met with silent gazes of grieve from the audience. The story that his young man had just told, was a love story between a human and a devil. No matter how different they were, they were deeply infatuated with each other. However, for these two, there was no happy ending, as only sadness enshrouded the end of their story.

The young man wrapped his story up with some self-composed lyrics. As the lyrics reached the ears of the audience, they could no longer hold their tears. Even the children, who had not yet acquired the taste of love, were overwhelmed by the atmosphere.

The young man rose up and rythmatically started playing the wooden instrument once more, before he was suddenly holding a crude wooden bowl to receive tips from the warm-hearted audience for his performance. Soon after, the bowl was filled with bronze coins; you could even see some silver sycee or Yuan bao [2] hidden between the bronze coins.

The village, governed under the Guanan prefecture, was blessed with plenty of resources and affluence. You might say that the citizens here were poorly educated, but that didn't change the fact that they had an abundance of riches.

In this small village, there was seldom any entertainment to enjoy. The

story, that was just told by the young man, was especially cherished by the people here. Touched by this story's tragic romance, the audience even started dreaming of becoming one of the leading roles. The young man had successfully formed a large group of fans and he was generously rewarded each time he finished another one of his stories. After packing all of his belongings, the young man bowed towards the audience and informed them at what time he would return to share another story. Then he turned around and walked away.

You may wonder who this teenager was. He was Xu Yi, an 18 year old boy who was raised in the neighboring Xu Village. In the early years of his life, he was just an oblivious young man, no different from those slackers found on the streets. However, as he grew up, his talent for storytelling began to show and this had quickly made him a famous person in the neighborhoods in and surrounding Xu Village.

A bright golden sunshine was pouring down on the verdant Hui Yin Mountain, which stretched far into the distance. This mountain range had oddly a striking resemblance to the spine of an exceedingly giant dragon. In the lowest part of this mountain range, there were some seventy or eighty wooden houses located. They dotted this mountain range like chess pieces randomly placed on a board.

At the foot of the Hui Yin Mountain, there was a shabby wooden house, which even looked a little bit skewed due to years of erosion by the wind and rain. Yes, as one might have guessed, this was the place where Xu Yi lived.

To Xu Yi, the tumbled-down house represented home. This was the place where he felt most calm and secure at.

“Whoof, woof!”

An old dog with yellow fur barked and started running merrily towards Xu Yi, as if he couldn't wait any longer to greet his master. In order to welcome Xu Yi, the dog even made a rather intimate gesture by jumping up high and putting his front paws around the shoulders of his master.

During the 18 years of comradery, Xu Yi had stopped treating this dog as a pet and had started to consider him as a member of his family. This was because Xu Yi's parents had died in the ferocious attack that was orchestrated by their enemies. He was an only child, so after losing his parents in this attack, all that he had left is this dog. This was also why the dog meant so much to him.

Every day, the old dog would sit at the doorsteps, with his bright eyes staring into the distance, calmly awaiting the return of his master. For Xu Yi, it was a great joy and a feeling of immense luck, to have found such a loyal companion.

Yu Xi tenderly caressed his dog's head, as he looked at the dog's wrinkles, that had quietly emerged over the years. He greatly enjoyed the harmonious and happy relation he had with this old companion.

On his way home, Xu Yi and the dog walked on the mountain road, which was too narrow to allow both of them to walk alongside each other. The thistles and thorns were densely covering the road, but the dog bravely whipped them away with his tail. Xu Yi knew very well, that this dog would do everything within its powers to protect him, even if his tail did hurt by doing so.

When they finally arrived home, it was already lunch time. Xu Yi had been so busy this morning, that he was exhausted and hungry. He calmly walked towards the corner of his house and picked up a big chunk of pickled red meat, roughly 3 kg in weight, and filled a bowl with rice. With the meat in one hand and the bowl of rice in the other, he went back outside. He made his way towards the side of the wooden house, here there was a small shed, where two black cooking pots were placed on a traditional hearth. Xu Yi put the meat in one pot and the rice in the other.

He ignited the hearth and covered the cooking pots. Since it would take a while for the food to be ready for consumption, Xu Yi decided to enjoy himself by reading a book while waiting. He opened a book that was titled 'Nan Hua Collection', and as he did, the dog came over and quietly lied down beside him.

A beautiful mountain scenery and a tender breeze, Xu Yi loved this tranquility and inward peacefulness. After quite some time, the delicious aroma of the nicely cooked meat and rice started coming out from the crevice of the lid. The smoke that was emerging from the cooking pots, was even elegantly dancing on the wind.

Xu Yi closed the book and was about to open the lid of the pot, when he suddenly felt his eyes drastically twitch. He quickly realised that this was probably not a promising signal, so he instinctively threw himself to the ground, right on top of his dog, closely hugging him.

- Bang! - A loud noise bursted out from the hearth. The explosion completely took the kitchen apart, it had even caused a cloud of dust and debris to quickly spread out.

"Your Excellency, that throw is really an eye-opener. Just how did you

throw a 15 kg millstone 30 meters away and still hit the target? You've achieved another breakthrough in your cultivation!" The crude voice of a man could be heard closeby.

Looking at where the sound originated from, shock appeared on Xu Yi's face. He then quickly snatched his dog and put it in the house, before locking the door. Xu Yi then positioned himself squarely in front of his house, knowing that he had no reason to dodge like a coward.

"This smell is so inviting! Ah, what a comfortable life, with meat to eat and wine to drink. I hear that you have found your own way to earn a living. I am truly envious of you..." Junior Zhou, the son of a high official, said in a sarcastic tone. Two bodyguards were standing on either side of Junior Zhou. One had a full beard and the other had an aquiline nose and deep eyes. You could tell from their appearances alone, that these two guys were rather strong.

"Your Excellency, please don't make such ridiculous jokes. I just fabricate some dull stories to make ends meet. I don't deserve to be mentioned in the same breath with you." Xu Yi restrained himself and managed to speak calmly.

"Of course you don't deserve it!"

The man with the full beard strode forward and only stopped as he stood right in front of Xu Yi, attempting to scare the latter. "You are a smart boy, you know why we have come. Cut the bullshit and let's get straight to the point." the man with the full beard said with a grim laugh and then hit Xu Yi on his cheek.

"Your Excellency, please trust me. I have already submitted the land title deed to the local government. You know the government has to go through some red tape and it takes some time. I promise, tomorrow, everything will be sorted out." Xu Yi said humbly.

Junior Zhou laughed out loudly, "Listen! I will go to the Hui Yin Mountain for hunting tomorrow. You'd better await me there and give me the title deed. You won't let me down, right? Or else, you know what will happen to you! Actually, I've heard that you recently started practicing Chinese boxing, why don't we have a fight tomorrow? We will even be so kind as to give you a few pointers!"

Suddenly, the man with the full beard snatched Xu Yi by his collar and lifted him up. "Yeah, that's right. We'll give you some helpfull pointers then!"

Hardly had his voice faded away, or he slammed hard on Xu Yi's shoulder. Just like a kite without a rope, Xu Yi was send flying for about ten meters. After he crashed into the ground, there was blood gushing out of the corners of his mouth and he was looking extremely pale.

"Your Excellency, he is as weak as an ant! A little finger is enough to send him to hell. He wishes to practice martial arts? This is the funniest thing I've ever heard of!" The man with the full beard said inbetween a wild bray of laughter.

Junior Zhou threw a despicable look at Xu Yi, before he turned away. "You are the black sheep of your family. Weak as an ant and valueless as a piece of shit, you're nothing. You don't live up to your ancestors' expectations, they'll be so angry with you that they might even rise from their graves, just to reprimand you. Oh that's right, I almost forgot to tell

you, revered Ming De's [3] grave was destroyed. But you don't have to worry about this anymore as we've already renovated it into a pigpen!"

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[1]: Two pieces of wood made of huang li mu: an instrument used in storytelling, to make the event more melodious and attractive.

picture link: [http://www.efloras.org/object\\_page.aspx?object\\_id=93318&flora\\_id=2](http://www.efloras.org/object_page.aspx?object_id=93318&flora_id=2)

[2]: Yuan bao: a sycee or yuan bao is a type of silver or gold ingot currency used in imperial China.

[3]: Ming De: one of Xu Yi's family members who was killed by his family's enemies.

## Chapter Two - Peak State

Xu Yi lied down on the ground with one hand buried deeply in the soil. Being insulted and beaten up, he couldn't do anything, but helplessly watch as Junior Zhou casually walked away.

Actually, he had only arrived in this world approximately two years ago. After he had arrived in this world and entered the body of the original Xu Yi, he had retained all the former's memories. Hence what Junior Zhou had just said grieved him a lot.

This was about a family feud that was already going on for several generations!

Ever since the great-great-grandfather of Xu Yi, Ming De, had mastered the complicated cultivation of Wu Dao, their family had quickly risen up to become a prominent factor in this village. Zhou's great-great-grandfather, a refugee at the time, fled to the 'Guanan' prefecture and eventually became the Xu Family's domestic servant.

This meant, that junior Zhou is actually a mere third generation servant!

However, Zhou Daoqian, junior Zhou's uncle, was a genius in cultivating Wu Dao. At the age of thirty, he had already successfully learned its essence. At that point he became a member of the Peak Tower, one of the three most famous schools in Guanan. Due to Zhou Daoqian's achievements in cultivating Wu Dao, their whole family had even escaped



from the clutches of slavery and established the Zhou Family, which had since then become an influential family in this area.

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When Ming De had eventually passed away, no offspring had the potential to cultivate Wu Dao, except for one of the slaves, Zhou Daoqian, who had even shown a great talent for it. Despite the fact that Daoqian was only a servant in the Xu Family, Xu Yi's grandfather generously gave him the guidance to cultivate in Wu Dao, with the help of notes that were written down by Ming De. It was justifiable to say that without the support from the Xu Family, by tutoring him with Ming De's notes and with the needed materials, Zhou Daoqian would've never been able to master Wu Dao.

Because, in order to be successful, resources were the key. Even if you were a peerless genius in some field, without any resources, like rare magical herbs or special guidance, you would most likely degrade into mediocrity.

Everyone searched for their own beneficial terms in this world. Since Ming De had passed away, the Xu Family was in dire need of a new powerful master to build on. Since the only talented person had been uncle Zhou, they had decided to nurture him, in the hope that he would protect them once he would become a force to be reckoned with.

However, reality doesn't always happen as it is expected to. Uncle Zhou was sadly a person who didn't have any sense of gratitude. The more fame he acquired, the more hatred he felt towards his identity as a mere servant. Thus, he planned to cut himself loose from these invisible chains.

Although Uncle Zhou had already become a member of the Peak Tower, he wasn't satisfied with his individual success. Feeling ashamed by his family's background as servants, he was determined to take revenge on the Xu Family and replace them. Uncle Zhou began mapping out a big plot. He was confident that he could easily kill the entire Xu Family by himself, but considering his position nowadays, due to cultivating Wu Dao, he didn't want to sacrifice his reputation by betraying his master's family. So he decided to follow master Sun's Art of War, and decided to achieve complete victory without firing a single shot.

Uncle Zhou designed a fake crime and sued the Xu Family for committing this fabricated wrongdoing. This was a hard blow for the Xu Family. Eventually, a great-grandfather in the Xu Family had even died of extreme anger. Ever since, the once prosperous Xu Family had been on a rapid decline. Over the span of twenty years, Uncle Zhou had been using countless of tricks to annihilate the Xu Family. Eventually, the Xu Family collapsed economically and Xu Yi's parents were subsequently toiled to death.

Xu Yi became an orphan and had to earn a living on his own. Luckily, he had read piles of classics and history books ever since he was very young. Therefore, he had quickly found a job as a teacher in one of the schools in Xu Village. At this time he was only 16 years old.

When the Zhou Family heard that Xu Yi had found a job as a teacher, they had shamelessly threatened the school in order to get Xu Yi fired. And as expected, Xu Yi was fired soon after. The Zhou Family ruthlessly drained everything that came from the Xu Family.

Suffering from a mixed feeling of extreme anger and horror, Xu Yi had eventually died. However, At the moment of his death, a soul had miraculously drifted by. This led to Xu Yi being revived with a stranger's soul inside his 'dead' body.

Since Xu Yi was not 'dead', the Zhou Family had thought of countless new ways to make his life as miserable as possible.

All the Xu Family members had already passed away due to the schemes of the Zhou Family, leaving only Xu Yi. After the 'new' Xu Yi had processed all the memories of the late Xu Yi, he swore to take revenge for 'his' Xu Family!

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Xu Yi had barely stabilized himself after getting up, when he vomited a mouthful of blood. As he tried to open his mouth, he realised that there was a small wound on his lip. However, the pain coming from his mouth was nothing compared to the soreness deep inside his heart.

He then unlocked the door to his house, letting the dog back out. The two of them then searched through the debris and managed to find some edible meat and rice, which they happily enjoyed. After they finished their lunch, Xu Yi made his way into the mountains, which were surrounding his house, and began hunting some wild animals for food.

As night fell, moonlight quickly spread all over the place, making it look exceedingly tranquil and peaceful. Xu Yi had already returned from a successful hunt and had decided to do something important tonight. He

was now only waiting for his dog to fall asleep before he'd leave to do this 'important' thing.

Xu Yi was sitting inside, looking into the distance, waiting for his dog to finally fall asleep. After his dog finally fell asleep, He quietly got up and left, closing the door behind him. He then went down along a mountain trail and into the forest where he quickly struck a pose and shouted, "Hu! Ha! Hu! Ha!"

Xu Yi started acting like an ox, sometimes raising his head, sometimes stamping his feet and sometimes hitting a nearby tree. He practiced these three movements over and over again. He did so restlessly, for four hours, only occasionally putting some black looking herb into his mouth.

While practicing, Xu Yi seemed to be moving rather slow, as if there was a large weight pressing down on him. With these movements Xu Yi guided qi throughout his blood vessels. Until he eventually successfully reached a subtle state, where he did no longer feel any pain or exhaustion. This happened because the qi was now perfectly flowing throughout all of his blood vessels.

"Hu! Ha!"

Exhausting his physical strength, Xu Yi jumped into a giant pine tree and knocked the tree down, which fell with a - thud - sound.

As the tree came crashing down, Xu Yi steadily landed on the ground and curled up, looking similar to a spineless shrimp. He was completely exhausted on the outside. However, deep inside, he was overwhelmed with an incomparable happiness and a sense of accomplishment.

Because he realised that this last gesture, which had knocked the tree down, had the equivalent power to an ox's strength, which was an indication of having reached the peak state of a forged body.

Even though he was incomparably happy, he was also shocked that he had reached the peak state in such a short amount of time. He gasped for air as he started to regain some energy. After a while Xu Yi got up and, after searching around for a bit, picked up a stick. He weighed this stick until he suddenly made a quick movement with his hand, as he hit the stick right in the middle, cutting it in half. He threw away one of the two pieces, while he held the other part of the stick firmly in his hand, before he cut it across one of his arms, to see if he could make it bleed. To his satisfaction, this action only left a deep white mark, not even letting a single drop of blood come out. Xu Yi was overjoyed by this result, as it was exactly what would happen after one entered the peak state of a forged body.

As he looked at the result on his arm, excitement quickly started to drive him crazy. He quickly tried everything he could think of to reassure himself, that he was in fact at the peak state of a forged body. In his euphoria he suddenly noticed a large rock and quickly ran towards it. He loosened his shoulders, readying his fists and then suddenly smashed his fist on this large rock. - Bamm! - He was astonished, as he saw the rock collapse in a mere second!

"Ox's skin, iron bone! The peak state of a forged body, it truly deserves its reputation!" Xu Yi stared at his palms and murmured.

After he calmed himself down a bit, Xu Yi realised that he should leave this place at once and do something to stabilise this newly acquired peak state.

He quickly made his way back to the wooden house. Here he sought out a dozen of Oolong herb and held them in his palms. He then walked into the bathroom to prepare a warm bath. As the bath was finally ready, he sat down in the bath and took a meditative pose. Xu Yi concentrated all his attention on the qi inside his body and as he did, he felt how his body was getting hotter and hotter. Thanks to this heat, the qi could easily penetrate into his blood vessels and meridians [1]. In other words, the qi incorporated with his body.

After he finished stabilizing this peak state, he rose up from the bathtub. As he looked at the water in the bathtub, he realised that it seemed to have turned into a somewhat dark color. He then turned and looked in the mirror and there he saw a gentle, rather than tough, young man. He could even vaguely see a miraculous energy that was disguised within this gentleness.

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[1]: A meridian chart:

[https://theamt.com/meridian\\_chart\\_and\\_map\\_of\\_meridians\\_meridian\\_p](https://theamt.com/meridian_chart_and_map_of_meridians_meridian_p)

## Chapter Three - Liao Chen

Xu Yi put on a linen coat and combed his hair. After being satisfied with his appearance, a touch of crudeness appeared in his expression.

He suddenly noticed the ginger on the old desk, which reminded him of something that he had been trying to forget. These were the unpleasant memories of the endless insults and torments caused by the Zhou Family, but he failed to do so. However, being physically tortured, his ego, or self-esteem, was still intact. He believed in himself and was determined to cultivate himself into a higher realm.

Previously, Xu Yi had decided that it was not the right time to expose his quick cultivating progress, in case Junior Zhou would disturb the learning process. He had even disguised himself as a hilarious coward for years, but now, it was finally time to show up!

Xu Yi picked the ginger up, then made his way outside and threw it away, far into the distance. He'd no longer need to apply this ginger on his body to make his skin look yellowish. Now, since he had obtained the peak state of a forged body, the skin was visibly white. But, he was no longer afraid of being seen through by the Zhou Family.

- Bing! Bang! -

The sound of a gong [1] indicated that it was nearly midnight. Xu Yi stopped pondering and turned to look at the sleeping old dog. He caressed the dog attentively and then picked two chickens up from under

his bed.

What should he do with these two chickens?

He lifted the two chickens by the neck and started to run towards the forest in the south.

The Hui Yin Mountain was famous for its scenery and vastness. From east to west, it reached 5,000 km, and from south to north, it reached 2,500 km. There were as many as three prefectures located in this area. Within the territory of the Da Yue Empire, the Hui Yin Mountain was definitely the largest mountain.

In daylight, the scenery surrounding the Hui Yin Mountain was breathtaking, however, at night, it was a totally different picture. The pitch darkness and the sounds of grunting wild animals, would probably scare anyone half to death. People were usually too terrified to come here alone at night.

However, Xu Yi was an exception. Despite the fact that it was dark and chilly, Xu Yi instinctively made his way into the darkness at a high speed. He smartly passed through all the big branches that were blocking his way, as if he came here every day.

Nevertheless, danger was lurking everywhere in this dark forest. There was, for example, a gigantic python lurking on one of the tall trees. When Xu Yi ran underneath this tree, the python suddenly attacked. But Xu Yi responded like a bat out of hell, spontaneously whacking this evil creature, which slammed it into a nearby tree.



This was actually the first time that Xu Yi truly tasted the magic of power, he continued running deeper into the forest, with his loose coat waving behind him like a flag, until he finally came across some Chinese Scholar Trees [2].

Xu Yi looked in the vast sky and calculated that it was about time to summon his ghost Sifu [3]. He ceremoniously took out three incense sticks and placed them on the ground in the shape of a triangle. He then proceeded to lit these three incense sticks as an offering for his Sifu.

In a split second, there were clouds of black vapor emerging behind the largest of the three Chinese scholar trees. Gradually, the vapor descended above the burning incense sticks and took the shape of a, somewhat vague, human body.

This being was a monk with an exotic appearance - his head was horribly oversized and there was a ring of Buddha beads around his neck. Interestingly, the beads were about the size of an egg, which was miraculously a perfect match with his head.

Instead of being terrified by this supernatural event, on the contrary, Xu Yi was rather excited. When he was about to speak to this monk, he realised that there occurred some dispersing in parts of the ghost's body. Xu Yi quickly held the two chickens in his hands and broke their necks. Spraying the blood of the chickens towards the fading being, this blood successfully helped the ghost's body to stop from dispersing and then it even started to slowly reshape some of the dispersed parts.

"Sifu!" Xu Yi exclaimed.

The ghost put his hands together in front of him and calmly said, "Chan Yue (The name Sifu has given to Xu Yi), this is not the first time that I'll tell you that I am already dead. You don't need to call me Sifu, I'm nothing more than a ghost. It's true... I have taught you how to obtain a forged body, and you've learned it well. But it was your persistence that has led you to this ending, not me. You can't become a Buddha with things unsettled in the mortal world. In other words, you are not qualified to learn the way to become a Buddha at this stage." He then continued with chanting some scriptures [4].

"Even if you don't treat me as your follower, I would always call you Sifu. It's you who taught me how to practice and who consoled me when I was depressed." Xu Yi responded with absolute sincerity.

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The new soul, that had possessed Xu Yi's body for nearly two years now, only had two friends in this world, one was the dog and the other one was this ghost. The story between Xu Yi and his ghost Sifu began on his third day in this world, after his soul had transferred into the body of the dead Xu Yi. That was a gloomy afternoon; Xu Yi was sitting on the doorsill, awaiting the upcoming rainstorm. At that moment, the ghost Sifu had walked silently in front of Xu Yi.

"Hey, the rain is coming. Why don't you come in and have a rest." Xu Yi had shouted at the ghost.

"Oh, Kid, you can see the invisible ghost!" Sifu was taken aback by Xu

Yi's special ability.

Xu Yi had been surprised, but not the slightest bit scared; he had looked at the ghost closely and had found that his body was as light as a piece of silk. Still, Xu Yi had invited the ghost in.

The ghost, named Liao Chen, used to be a monk in the Tian Chan temple. He was supposed to be travelling around the world, but he had been caught up in an accident when he had arrived in the Guanan prefecture. As a ghost, he was extremely eager to go home and tell his relatives that he was dead, otherwise they would wait helplessly for years, not knowing that he was long dead.

However, the ghost was too feeble to exist. When he had gone to the Hui Yin Mountain, he had already almost faded away. It had been a blessing for Liao Chen to meet Xu Yi, who had since prepared chicken blood each day to help the ghost maintain its shape. This was a secret method this ghost Sifu had taught him.

Out of gratitude, Liao Chen even taught Xu Yi how to achieve a forged body.

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Three months ago, Liao Chen had made an appointment with Xu Yi - If his ghost body weakened before he'd able to return to his hometown, then they would meet a final time at these Chinese Scholar Trees.

"This is my destiny. My time is coming, and I have to say goodbye to

you. It's not that cruel to me, at least I have had the fortune to meet you."

"Sifu, I will help you!" Xu Yi lost control, as tears were starting to roll down his cheeks.

The Sifu tried several times to give Xu Yi a firm hug to console him, but found that his actions were in vain, because his body was already too weak to feel anything.

"Don't cry... It's ok... Hey, what are your achievements recently? Will you perform it for me? I hope we still have some time before I disappear..." The Sifu suddenly said, full of expectations.

Xu Yi slightly regained his composure, positioning himself and gave out a roar before stretching his fists.

"Monster ox! Furious push! Free Tianmo!" He shouted out the names of the actions as he performed them like a crazy ox, in the blink of an eye, all the trees around him were smashed into bits and pieces.

When the routine was finished, Xu Yi adjusted his body without any gasping or flushing. He was completely stable. This incredible performance even stunned Sifu.

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[1]: Gong: It was used to remind people what time it was at night in ancient China.

<http://www.objectlessons.org/ceremony-and-celebration-music/brass-gong-china/s80/a995/>

[2]: Chinese scholar tree or Japanese pagoda tree:

<http://www.colostate.edu/Dept/CoopExt/4dmg/Trees/pagoda.htm>

[3]: Sifu: It is used as a title for and role of a skillful person or a master.

[4]: Buddhist chant: A Buddhist chant is a form of musical verse or incantation, related to their own school.

## Chapter Four - Lament

These Monster Ox Movements had originated from the Heaven-Zen temple, where only disciples from the temple had the privilege to learn.

Liao Chen was singled out as a potential talent to learn these movements, back when he had joined the temple. His recommender was a famous Zen master in this temple, named Jiu Ru. Later, Liao Chen taught Xu Yi what he had learned from his master.

It took Xu Yi merely two years to master these movements while, as a teacher, Liao Chen had spent nearly ten years! Obviously, Xu Yi grossly outperformed his Sifu. Even the most promising disciple, Bei Chen, who was considered to be a peerless genius, had practiced for three whole years before mastering these moves.

The short learning span of three years was considered sensational in the Heaven-Zen Temple, and Bei Chen was praised as a rare genius who could only emerge once in an interval of fifty years.

To raise a genius like Bei Chen, the Heaven-Zen Temple had used up numerous precious herbs for his cultivation.

...

As he looked at the young man in front of him, Liao Chen felt totally confused. How could an orphan, with only a part time job as a storyteller, earn the money to buy the required rare herbs? Plus, it only took him two

years to reach this stage with these limited resources.

This was truly a miracle!

“You are made for these movements. To tell you the truth, I was a little bit worried when I taught you these movements, which is only allowed to be taught to Heaven-Zen Temple disciples. But look at what you have achieved now, I am so relieved. Because I bet, that Master Jiu Chan will not blame me for this, he loves young talents like you.” Liao Chen praised Xu Yi and then clasped his hands together.

“You may say I am smart or talented. Yet, I am not. On the contrary, I am a foolish boy. The only secret that makes me a success is diligence. If others practice once, I will probably practice one hundred times more than them.”

“Well, well, your words are truly enlightening! I believe in you! I don’t have much time now, come closer and listen carefully.” It seemed that Liao Chen was intending to share some secret with Xu Yi.

...

When Liao was in his thirties, he had made a breakthrough in his cultivation – He surpassed the peak state of a forged body and entered into a new realm – the state of an ocean of qi. Because of this, he was quickly appointed as a keeper in the scripture library of the Heaven-Zen Temple.

In the following years, Liao Chen obediently did his job as a scripture

keeper, sweeping the floor, or stacking the scriptures onto the shelves. On top of the routines, he kept cultivating in Wu Dao, as he was obsessed with it.

Fifteen years had passed, and everything was on track, until one day – Rumors had spread all over the Heaven-Zen Temple, that Liao Chen had stolen a special scripture and had fled. The leaders of the Heaven-Zen Temple were outraged and listed him as the most wanted monk.

Liao Chen fled with the scripture to Guanan. Unfortunately, soon after arriving here, he was arrested and beaten to death. Only his ghost managed to barely survive, which had eventually encountered Xu Yi.

...

Liao Chen told Xu Yi of the crime he had committed, even though he originally hadn't planned to tell Xu Yi. Now, since he wouldn't stay much longer in this world and there was still unfinished business left to take care of, he needed Xu Yi to help him out.

"There is an old saying, that if you can't surpass the state of an ocean of qi at the age of sixty, then you will never surpass it in your whole life. As I grew older, this really scared me. Originally, I intended to rely on this secret scripture to find a shortcut in my cultivation. Nevertheless, haste made waste... I learned nothing from this scripture, not because it was useless, but the technique described is beyond my ability. I have long wished to repent for my theft. Please do me a favor and give back this scripture to the Heaven-Zen Temple!" Liao Chen explained in a sincere manner.



Liao Chen knelt down and begged Xu Yi to help him.

"I will! I will!" Xu Yi quickly moved to his Sifu and tried to help him up.

However, All of a sudden, a wild wind blew away the remaining parts of Liao Chen. He just faded away, only leaving a horrible groaning. Watching all this, Xu Yi was spiritually suffering. He helplessly looked around the forest and confirmed for himself that his Sifu was really gone forever.

He shouted his Sifu's name in the silent forest, in the hope that his Sifu might hear it. To his disappointment, however, except for the noises of wild animals, there was no response. Eventually, he shouted like a monster, letting out the greatest of grievances, one that was beyond words. All the memories between him and his Sifu emerged in his vision, like slides on a projector.

The morning sunshine shone brightly through the branches, Xu Yi realised that morning had already arrived. He had stayed up all night lamenting over his Sifu. He stood up and moved to a clear space to dig a hole and bury the remaining parts of the incense sticks. He tirelessly searched around the forest, searching for an acceptable tombstone. Not much later, he returned with a large piece of wood that would serve as the tombstone.

After an hour, Xu Yi reluctantly left the grave and went down to the foot of the Hui Yin Mountain. On his way, he came across a wild pig, which he effortlessly hunted. Before, hunting was not an easy job for him. But now, he was a completely different person with immense power, who could smash wood and stone with the greatest of ease.

Looking up into the sky, the sun was shining brightly. The terrace in the distance was covered with plants, as farmers were working on it. Some were hoeing, others were ploughing.

To some extent, the alluring scenery alleviated Xu Yi's sadness. Suddenly, Without warning, a cloud of black smoke rose up in the northwest. It seemed like it originated from where Xu Yi's wooden house was located. Xu Yi could even hear a dog barking bitterly.

"Oh, no! My dog!"

Xu Yi was so infuriated that all his blood was about to reach the boiling temperature. He used up all of his remaining energy to speed up home. Sadly, it was already too late.

The wooden house was burned down to the ground. There was nothing left.

Xu Yi searched around like crazy. Until. eventually, he saw the dog's four legs, which were penetrated by wooden sticks. That was not even the crudest part, touching on the dog's head, Xu Yi found that the dog's skin had been ripped off from his head to his breast.

Surprisingly, the dog was actually still alive with eyes full of tears and blood. He stared, with blood-and tear stained eyes of love at Xu Yi. Until finally, the dog closed his eyes one final time. Tears bursted out of Xu Yi's eyes as he took the dead dog in his warm embrace.

Xu Yi's face was deformed into a strange look, with blue veins protruding and wide open bloodshot eyes. An extreme rage was dominating his mind.

The dog had been around Xu Yi since his childhood. When he was a little boy he would ride on the dog's back, which was still one of the most memorable things in his life. In summer time, the dog would waive its tail to drive away the mosquitoes that would be buzzing around Xu Yi. Sometimes the dog would go into the forest and come back home with chickens and rabbits for Xu Yi to cook... The dog was more than a pet, it was a family member!

The consecutive blows on Xu Yi drove him crazy, as he rushed back into the forest, in search for some consolation. He ran and ran, like an unbridled monster, cutting down all the nearby plants and trees. Xu Yi eventually climbed up to the summit of a small mountain and a while later he slowly walked back down to the foot of this mountain. His mind had turned bleak.

After a considerable period of time, Xu Yi was suddenly completely sober. He accepted the brutal events and prepared to dig a grave for his dog. He then buried the dog and wiped away all of his tears.

## Chapter Five - Threatened

An hour later, Xu Yi arrived at a brook, where he dove head first into the water and gulped like an ox. He then picked a stick up and made one end sharp pointed, like a spear. After several times of pricking into the water, Xu Yi harvested a dozen of red carps, which were still vibrantly jumping up and down on the dry land.

Xu Yi peeled off the scales and emptied the viscera, before he gobbled the carps raw.

It was true that once you reached the peak state of a forged body, you'd be stronger than an ox, and his appetite would be comparable to a tiger. The carps, that weighed 25 kg in total, were eaten by Xu Yi raw and with the bones!

This 'delicious' dinner made Xu Yi too full to move around. So he just sat down and crossed his legs so that he could concentrate himself on the flowing of the qi in his body and he recharged himself to his optimal strength.

Hours before, the loss of his dog and Sifu had driven Xu Yi mad, but now he seemed much more peaceful, at least, judging from his outer appearance. Or maybe it was just the calm before the storm.

Soon, night fell and the breeze from the mountain sobered Xu Yi's mind. While enjoying this tranquil moment, Xu Yi sensed that there was some tapping sounds, that might originate from boots or hoofs. Vigilant

as he was, Xu Yi quickly rose up and he could now clearly hear the sound of neigh and shouting from afar. Based on the sound, Xu Yi believed there were probably more than ten horses running in his direction.

Xu Yi quickened his pace and within seconds, he arrived at the nearby mountain path.

A group of horses were marching forward, with Junior Zhou leading in the front. Dead wild animals were hung on each of the horses. The flags were fluttering in the air, which was an obvious indication that they were on their way back home after a successful hunt.

Everyone in this hunting group was overjoyed, which you could tell from their expressions. Even Junior Zhou couldn't help whistling for their triumph, even though he was usually known as an indifferent guy.

The guy with the full beard merrily sang a ditty along the way, the contents of which were rather scurrilous. Others responded with a shout of applause, they were enjoying his songs on this long and dull journey back home.

The bodyguard with the hawk nose, next to Junior Zhou, was always on alert and he suddenly whispered to Zhou: "I sense danger ahead of us!"

The man with the hawk nose was the first one who had joined the Zhou Family. He was rather powerful and had even mastered a special technique. This made him become the most credible man in this group, once he warned that there might be danger ahead, everyone in the group quickly prepared for a possible fight. They took out their swords and pulled their bowstrings, ready for anything dangerous.

"It's over there!" The man with the hawk nose shouted with a level-headed mind.

"Who is getting in our way? No one in the vicinity would dare to turn against my Zhou Family! Today shall be his doomsday!" Junior Zhou whipped the claret-red horse to make it go faster and the rest of the group followed.

Xu Yi was steadily standing in the middle of the road, quietly waiting for Junior Zhou.

The man with the full beard quickly got excited when he realised that the 'danger' was actually Xu Yi, as it was perfect timing for him to kill this ant and get more rewards from the Zhou Family. Compared to the man with the hawk nose, the guy with the full beard was much less favored by the Zhou Family; he had stagnated in the later periods of a forged body and still showed no signs of improvement. So he had to seize this opportunity to arrest Xu Yi ahead of anyone else.

When the group had passed Xu Yi's house, the man with the full beard had also been the one who had set fire to this house and he had even killed Xu Yi's dog without Junior Zhou's order. He did this simply out of selfishness, as he desired to get more rewards from the Zhou Family.

Now, he couldn't help but think that Xu Yi was actually doing him a favor, offering him a chance to obtain even more rewards. Even though there was a murderous look in Xu Yi's eyes, the man with the full beard still considered Xu Yi as an ant. Killing him would be as easy as slicing a hot knife through butter. He whipped hard on the back of his black horse

and rushed ahead of Junior Zhou.

“Pariah, get out of the way! Or else I will skin you alive!” The man with the full beard threatened Xu Yi in a spiteful voice. He then made the horse run straight at Xu Yi, intending to knock his body over and trample it.

Xu Yi stood erect and unshakable, until the hoof of the horse was about to land on his body. He suddenly dodged the horse like a flash of lightning, before he shrunk his body like a bow, in order to accumulate momentum. All of a sudden, Xu Yi bounced off the ground like a spring. His iron like body rushed towards the neck of the horse, and the horse was, seemingly effortless, beheaded. After the head flew off, Xu Yi catapulted the remaining body of the horse towards the group.

Before the man with the full beard realised what had happened, he was already caught by Xu Yi. Within the group, he had always insulted Xu Yi the most. He would say how he’d skin Xu Yi alive, awaking every cell in Xu Yi’s body to bring this man to justice.

Looking at the situation getting worse, the man with the hawk nose jumped off his horse, before he rushed to Xu Yi and waved his fists towards the latter’s spine. You could even hear cracking sounds in the knuckles of his fists.

Xu Yi knew this attack would be fatal if it hit him. He quickly determined the best course of action and jumped up high, carrying the man with the full beard underneath him. He then jumped on the backs of the horse-riders one by one, in order to avoid the fist from the man with the hawk nose. It was like hanging on by a thread, a little bit of carelessness would be enough to cause an early demise. Fortunately, Xu

Yi successfully escaped the fist, which eventually fell on one of the group member's back. The man that got struck instantly exploded, leaving only a cloud of blood vapor.

The man with the hawk nose was not demoralized by his failure, as he quickly continued his attacks on Xu Yi.

Xu Yi, however, possessed a body nimble enough to keep away from these fatal attacks.

The man with the hawk nose was actually a well known figure that was also at the peak state of a forged body. With Junior Zhou's encouragement, he exhausted all his means to kill Xu Yi. However, they vastly underestimated Xu Yi's ability, leading to the latter cleverly dodging these attacks in a way that the attacks would always land on the men, that were escorting Junior Zhou. This went on until another seven of his men had perished.

- Boom! -

Suddenly, Xu Yi twisted off the neck of the last living member of the group, causing the dead body to fall off its horse.

Up until now, nine [1] people in the group had all died!

Junior Zhou was flabbergasted by Xu Yi's quickness and defense. He realised that Xu Yi was no longer the coward he had teased so much. The chill in Xu Yi's eyes reflected a sense of deep hatred towards Junior Zhou, which made him feel threatened as well as embarrassed.



As a member of the now prominent Zhou Family, Junior Zhou was half a step away from the peak state of a forged body. There were numerous outstanding followers in their own family, let alone his legendary Uncle, Zhou Daoqian, who was quite an influential individual within Guanan. Given their social status, Junior Zhou regarded it a burning shame if he showed any fear towards Xu Yi.

“Xu Yi, I know quite well that you are planning your revenge. My Uncle is right, anyone from the Xu Family is fond of using dirty tricks. You coward, why don’t we have a one-on-one fight?” Junior Zhou said with bloodshot eyes.

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[1]: Hey guys, quick editor note here. The raw says eight people died in total, while if we count the deaths from previous events in the raw we find 9 deaths. So we’ve decided to adjust it to 9 here.

## Chapter Six - Sacrifice

"Take your time, my servant. I won't fight with you, until I've finished offering sacrifice to my recently departed dog." Xu Yi replied emotionlessly to Junior Zhou.

Xu Yi raised his sharply nailed left thumb, pricking it in the head of the man with the full beard. Soon, on the surface of the head, there was a distinctive white line, with blood oozing out from the crevice. Xu Yi then rubbed on this white line with his left hand, causing parts of the scalp to let loose from the head. By tapping on the body of the man with the full beard, Xu Yi successfully snatched his skin, which was lengthy enough to hold and peel off. With the sound, similar to the tearing of a piece of cloth, the man with the full beard was skinned off from the head to the neck. Xu Yi considered this as a proper revenge, as this man in front of him had done the same to his dog.

By squeezing his throat, Xu Yi stopped the man with the full beard from making any clear sound. After which, the backbone of the man with the full beard was broken by Xu Yi, leaving the former unable to freely move. This was why there was only some dull and lowering groans coming from this man's mouth. Even someone who was in the final stages of a forged body, couldn't stand this kind of pain. It was a rather horrible scene to watch.

Never, in a million years, had Xu Yi done this kind of extreme cruelty. However, the hatred that was currently residing in Xu Yi's heart had driven him insane, he didn't even have any sympathy or uncomfortable feelings while he did all of this.

Xu Yi looked at the half-dead body of the man with the full beard, yet he still found his face obnoxious, so he stamped on the body until it was almost completely flattened. Finally, Xu Yi threw the airbag-like body high into the air, which could eventually be seen hanging on the top of a giant tree. Looking up at the dead body, you could still see blood dripping down and hear loud groaning sounds, like a shrimp without skin.

All these punishments towards the man with the full beard were done almost at lightning speed, it took Junior Zhou and his bodyguard with the hawk nose a while to know exactly, what had happened to the half-dead body hanging above them.

“Oh no...” The man with the hawk nose was totally bewildered, making a long wheezing noise in the open air.

Despite the fact that, in normal times, the man with the hawk nose would make little of the man with the full beard, who he considered as someone without any integrity. But now that the extreme maltreatment of his fellowman was happening right in front of his eyes, and he couldn't do anything to stop it, he felt extremely ashamed of himself.

“Listen, Xu Yi! I will smash you into pieces, you will regret being born into this world!”

Junior Zhou jumped from the horse, bursting with rage. He quickly took out his sword and pointed it directly at Xu Yi's throat. He waved his sword so quickly that it even left a glimmering curve in the air. “I swear that I will cut your head off and use it as my pissing pot!” Junior Zhou

exclaimed.

Xu Yi cautiously retreated thirteen steps as Junior Zhou waved his sword thirteen times. The swordsmanship was rather sophisticated, thus he could wield his sword so swiftly that you could hardly find where it was.

Although, Junior Zhou hadn't hit Xu Yi yet, he was excited that Xu Yi defended himself without fighting back, which showed Xu Yi was obviously intimidated by the quickness of his sword.

"Hey, Xu Yi. What I am utilizing is the thunder swordsmanship. I bet you've never heard of it. It originates from the Yu Qing Fairy, who is a member of the Tianshan School. In the past, My Uncle, together with Yu, swept thirty-six villages using this thunder sword technique. Now you can understand how powerful it is, right? These thirteen movements are just a quick warm-up, the following ones will be especially fatal and you will find yourself beheaded before you can even scream. Can you take it? Or, maybe I should show you some leniency and let you surrender, I might even leave your torso intact then." Junior Zhou seemed rather confident in defeating Xu Yi, as he spoke these words.

"Oh, a servant is always a servant. After all, you cannot make a crab walk straight. I suggest you stop showcasing these dull techniques and bring out all of your abilities. This way I'll finally know how much you've learned from your uncle, the disgraceful traitor!" Xu Yi replied with an indifferent laughter.

The mentioning of the word 'servant' brought great shame to Junior Zhou's pride. The Zhou Family was working hard on rewriting their family's background by keeping their servant identity, as the most

confidential information of their family. They even forbid anyone from talking about it.

“You bastard! I’ll send you to hell!” Junior Zhou roared like a lion.

Junior Zhou swayed his long sword and created nine sparkling flower-shaped circles, producing an invisible ripple-streak from the side towards the center. The power of this qi was everywhere in the air. The wild flowers on each side of the mountain road were even propelled by this qi and flew into the sky.

Elder Feng, who stood beside Junior Zhou, was absolutely confident in his young master. He calculated that, even though Junior Zhou and Xu Yi were both in the later stage of the peak state of a forged body, one was armed with a sword, while the other was barehanded. The game was already set. Even if Xu was extraordinary, he would be unable to defend against the thunder sword technique.

Suddenly, Without any warning, Xu Yi kicked a stone in the direction of Junior Zhou. The stone was about 5 kg in weight. It was rapidly shot towards Junior Zhou, leaving him no choice but to protect his body with his sword. The stone was grinded into piece by the powerful thunder swordsmanship. Junior Zhou was about to point the sword back towards Xu Yi, when another stone flew towards him... Perfect timing, Xu Yi took the initiative in this fight.

Several minutes later, Junior Zhou had smashed a dozen of stones. He couldn’t believe, even in his wildest dreams, that the famous thunder swordsmanship was used as a stone-smasher. Now, he was actually starting to become really exhausted.

Junior Zhou's sword technique was admittedly excellent, but he, however, was not that experienced in real fighting. Especially when it came to this confrontation with Xu Yi, who specialised in agility, successfully avoiding all of his attacks. The supposed victory turned out to be a dull draw.

Realizing the situation was reserved, Elder Feng decided to do something to help Junior Zhou out. "Your Excellency, please allow me to kill him." Elder Feng walked forward, as he asked for permission.

"Never! I'll kill him myself!" Junior Zhou replied with cold eyes. "Wait, I can feel that this bastard is also losing his strength. I can see through his tactics – he tries to exhaust my strength by ceaselessly kicking stones at me. But look, his own strength is waning at the same time! It takes him much more strength in this process, as I have the weapon. Let's see how much longer he can endure!" Junior Zhou continued.

"What a brilliant insight!" Elder Feng replied in a flattering manner. Looking back at Xu Yi, he reassured himself with what his master had analysed – Xu Yi was sweating with a rather pale look on his face, there seemed to be not much strength left for him to continue fighting.

- Dang! -

- Dang! -

Junior Zhou was exultant to find that the momentum of the stones were becoming lower and lower, which meant that Xu Yi was terribly fatigued. Junior Zhou seized this moment, stepping closer to Xu Yi. He then aimed

his sword at Xu Yi's baihui acupoint [1].

"Go to hell!" Zhou screamed, as he charged at Xu Yi to kill him.

"Good!" Xu Yi exclaimed, as he suddenly clamped the incoming sword with his hands and broke it into two halves. The pieces of the sword were then reversed back in Junior Zhou's direction and they stabbed deeply into his left shoulder.

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[1]: baihui acupoint or hundred convergences:

[http://taoism.about.com/od/Acupressure\\_Treasures/a/Bai-Hui-DU20.htm](http://taoism.about.com/od/Acupressure_Treasures/a/Bai-Hui-DU20.htm)

## Chapter Seven - Battlefield

- Ouch! -

Junior Zhou's bitter howl echoed throughout the mountains.

Elder Feng raised his eyebrows to the highest level, astonished by Xu Yi's ability. He then stomped his feet and moved quickly towards Junior Zhou, causing a dent in the ground where he stood. In the glimpse of an eye, he stretched out his hand and moved it towards Xu Yi.

Some of the messy hairs around Zhou's shoulder were cut off due to the quickness of Elder Feng's movements.

The hatred imbedded in Xu Yi's brain was so deep that he wouldn't let this opportunity to kill Junior Zhou go. So, instead of dodging the incoming attack, on the contrary, he stretched his hand out, waiting for Elder Feng's palm.

"Never overestimate yourself and bite off more than you can chew!" Elder Feng thought to himself, as he was confident that Xu Yi was too young to fight with him.

- Boom! -

A thunder like sound broke the silence when their two palms collided. Xu Yi stood his ground, only to find his feet sinking half an inch into the



soil. While Elder Feng seemed stable and at ease. Without any doubt, Elder Feng had the upper hand in this first round.

At least Xu Yi wasn't pushed backwards, he steadily stood his ground. Elder Feng couldn't help but wonder how much potential this young man possessed, as he originally expected to find this young man falling down or hurriedly retreating. Xu Yi seized this moment, when Elder Feng was pondering, as he rushed towards Junior Zhou, nipping off his left arm.

Startled and out of sheer rage, Elder Feng tore down his clothing and threw himself at Xu Yi, like a provoked lion.

Xu Yi quickly retreated several steps, successfully avoiding the incoming attack.

Unlike Xu Yi, Junior Zhou was raised in an affluent condition, where there were countless herbs for him to cultivate Wu Dao. That was to say, he had taken shortcuts to reach the peak state of a forged body. In reality, he had never been in so much pain before. He eventually blacked out, as he couldn't bear the immense pain of his arm being torn off and the wound on his shoulder, where the sword's blade was still imbedded.

Elder Feng swiftly sealed up several acupoints on Junior Zhou's body, in order to stop the bleeding. He then made him lie in a comfortable place.

"The peak state of a forged body! You were skinny with slacken bones two years ago. How could you cultivate to this state? Yes, it's true that you have started cultivating Wu Dao in recent years, but for your age, it should already be too late. That's why we've simply scorned you. We

never thought that you could ever achieve anything in Wu Dao. But now, You surprise me just like a bolt from the blue. How could you reach the peak state within only TWO years? Even those peerless geniuses, who are raised up in prominent families, are slower in cultivating to this point. This is both crazy and terrifying!” Elder Feng thought hard to persuade himself into believing what was happening right in front of him.

Junior Zhou was at the later stage of a forged body, so his skin was extremely tough and hard to penetrate. But Xu Yi had the ability to rip Zhou’s skin and even break off his arm, effortlessly as nipping a flower from the ground. No matter how unbelievable it seemed, there was only one explanation for this phenomenon – Xu Yi had already reached the peak state of a forged body.

Everyone in this world, from ordinary pedlars to respected celebrities, they all regarded the cultivation of Wu Dao as the most privileged road of life.

In the flourishing age of Wu Dao, numerous people embarked on the journey of cultivating Wu Dao, the odds of success was only one in a hundred. The peak state of a forged body was merely a threshold in entering the realm of Wu Dao. For those who had already met this preliminary entry level, they’d either cultivate themselves further into a higher realm, or become millionaires or celebrities. In a simple sentence, they would forever overcome poverty and be wealthy ever after.

Elder Feng was one of those guys who had jumped on the social ladder after obtaining the peak state. Before, he was just a bodyguard in a security bureau. But now, he had become the invitee of many government officials to have dinner with.

It had taken Elder Feng at least twenty years to acquire all these achievements. Plus, tremendous amounts of effort had been expended in his cultivating process. Yet, he still failed to figure out how Xu Yi, an orphan who was raised in the wild, could reach the peak state. Even if God endowed him with special talents, it was still almost impossible to believe.

"Maybe Xu Yi is just a lucky bastard!" Elder Feng murmured to himself.

"I have been in this realm for almost ten years, the strength of my palm is way beyond the power of an ox. In theory, anyone who has just reached the peak state will be defeated immediately by my palm. On the contrary, you act like a robust ox and stand still in front of my palm. But I can tell that you have obtained this peak state not long ago, it is truly amazing! You must have got some secret technique!" He said with greedy eyes, as he brooded a selfish plan - forcing Xu Yi to tell him the secret technique so that he could move into the next realm - an ocean of qi.

"Elder Feng, as Wu Dao cultivators, we're in the same realm. But you have started cultivating many years before I did, so I will treat you as a revered senior. But please, give me the reason why you are so submissive to the Zhou Family, since you've already obtained great achievements in Wu Dao. Honestly, I am ashamed of you." Xu Yi replied sarcastically.

"You little kid; you really are like a freshly born baby, unaware of the world around you. Wu Dao has prevailed for quite a long time, and it has now even been divided into various schools. Most of the herbs needed in cultivation are monopolized in the hands of a few prominent families, like the Zhou Family, thus if you don't have the money to buy the pricey herbs, then your path in Wu Dao is blocked forever. Only courage isn't enough in this world, we are in dire need of the assistance from those who can support us in our growth. I know you've achieved the peak state

within two years, but never overestimate yourself. If you don't have the proper assistance, you will be stagnant in the peak state, just like me. This is a harsh reality for all of us Wu Dao cultivators." Elder Feng confided to Xu Yi, in a gloomy mood.

"Since you undervalue yourself and have become a servant of the Zhou Family, have they offered you any assistance?" Xu Yi retorted.

"I have been in the Zhou Family for only five years. Obviously, my contribution to this family is far from enough, they won't randomly reward just anyone." Elder Feng said with a hint of embarrassment.

Suddenly, he stared at Xu Yi and smiled, "If I kill you today, however, it will be a great contribution to the Zhou Family. Since you have broken the arm of the most favorable nephew of revered Zhou (Junior Zhou's uncle, Zhou Daoqian), you will become the most wanted man in Guanan."

"Oh, that's why you let me break your master's arm, so that you can amplify your contribution." Xu Yi sneered at him.

"You bastard! Go to hell!" Elder Feng struck at Xu Yi with a sudden blow, almost in front of his face. The movement was finished in almost a split second, quietly and unnoticeable, not even causing any fluttering in the surrounding flowers.

- Hu! -

Too late to escape, Xu Yi took a deep breath and stretched his fist out towards Elder Feng. Given the fact they were both in the peak state, Xu Yi

wasn't particularly scared of this old man.

- Boom! -

When the two fists collided, a resonant noise echoed throughout the mountains. Elder Feng hit Xu Yi on the left shoulder, while Xu Yi hit Feng on the belly.

Elder Feng was only slightly hurt, with some blood spraying out of his mouth and his feet slightly sinking into the soil. On the other side, Xu Yi wasn't so lucky, as he was thrown away and slammed against a large tree. After hitting the tree, he fell to the ground. Here he lied quietly, not showing any signs of life.

## Chapter Eight – Armor Removed

“Ha, ha, ha” Elder Feng complacently chuckled.

“Kid, I know crystal clear why you are interested in talking with me - you are saving time in an attempt to regain some energy. So I have simply used a countermeasure against your plot. During our conversation, I have successfully formed the strength needed for the Tranquil Fist, which is equivalent to the strength of three oxen. By concentrating all my strength on one point, it triples. That’s my strategy! Enjoy the blow...”

Xu Yi’s entire body was screaming out in pain, even the bones were feeling like they had shifted from their original place. It was like being hit by a gigantic rock, the power of which was overwhelming. Xu Yi was about to faint, what Elder Feng said made a ripple in his mind: “the strength of three oxen? This is bullshit!”

What Xu Yi had learned from Liao Chen, was that when you attained the peak state of a forged body, you could only have the strength of one ox. Based on the difference in techniques and talent, there might be some discrepancy in the total strength. The weaker ones might obtain strength less than one ox, while the stronger ones would obtain strength a little bit more than one ox. It happened. But no one would ever surpass the strength of one and a half oxen.

Xu Yi himself presented a perfect example. If he concentrated all of his strength, it could be as much as one and a half ox. However, By doing this, he had to break the physical limits and make ample preparations.

But at this moment, he had seen Elder Feng exert the strength of three

oxen, he was forced to adjust the obtained information from his Sifu.

Elder Feng glimpsed at Xu Yi, as if looking at a dead body. Pulling apart a big branch from a tree, he quietly made it into a spear. He then pointed the spear at Xu Yi and stabbed it into his left shoulder blade.

In order to capture Xu Yi alive, Elder Feng intended to staple Xu Yi deeply into the ground. By doing so, he could force Xu Yi to give out the secret technique he was using to speed up his cultivation process.

-Hu, Hu-

Nevertheless, when the spear touched the shoulder blade of Xu Yi, it stopped with a muffled sound. Sharp as it was, the spear simply couldn't penetrate Xu Yi's skin.

As Elder Feng was completely dumbfounded, Xu Yi suddenly bounced up and stared at him.

It occurred to Xu Yi that the strength limit of one ox may not have been that accurate after all. Elder Feng must have used some secret technique to achieve the strength of three oxen. Xu Yi now finally understood why Elder Feng was so interested in chatting with him. He was saving time to gather the strength of three oxen yet again. But Xu Yi was not intimidated by Elder Feng, as he could quite clearly see that the previous 'strength of three oxen'-attack had already greatly exhausted this Elder.

"I bet it is beyond your ability to exert another strength of three oxen." Xu Yi said with a contemptuous tone. He then took his linen clothing off,

showing no skin, but instead dark iron. The iron protecting his belly was fractured due to the Tranquil Fist. There was also a hole in the shoulder part of the iron, which was left by the penetration of the spear.

“You were actually wearing an armor made of heavy iron? How can this be possible?” Elder Feng almost yelled at Xu Yi, trying to make sense of the armor. His expression right now was rather hilarious – with his mouth wide open and eyeballs sticking out, just like a cartoon figure.

Heavy iron was actually a common material for heavy weapons, which outweighed refined iron multiple times. It was popular among those with unusual strength.

The armor that was being removed by Xu Yi, weighed at least 250 kg. Anyone in the peak state of a forged body was able to gather one-ox strength, equivalent to 1,000 kg in weight. Compared with that, 250 kg was nothing.

Be that as it may, agilely moving around with a 250 kg armor tied around your body, was not an easy job. You might be able to carry a bag filled with sand that weighs a 100 kg, for instance, but once you have another bag filled with sand of only 25 kg tied around you, you would no longer be able to carry the previous 100 kg bag filled with sand.

So the 250 kg tied around the body and the 1000 kg weren't analogous to each other. They were different. The former represented endurance, while the latter represented instant forces.

The armor had been tied around Xu Yi's body for quite a long time. But it wasn't hampering with Xu Yi's quick movements in the slightest, it had



even become an integral part of his body.

Elder Feng was amazed with what Xu Yi had already achieved. And he kept pondering on how it was possible for such a young kid to obtain this kind power.

As we all know, one must go through four stages before escaping this mortal world – a forged body, an ocean of qi, the liquidation of qi and finally a grateful soul. In the forged body stage, the skin and bones were refined in a way that greatly increased their defense. At the same time, there was more qi available while fighting.

Even given all the advantages that a forged body would bring, no one should be able to endure the weight of the armor that Xu Yi carried, it was simply too heavy. Even some precious and rare herbs wouldn't be able to achieve this feat, as they could only support the cultivator physically. The spiritual suffering had to be overcome by one's will. If not managed properly, it was possible, that one might even kill himself due to this.

However, Xu Yi was an exception. He was successfully improving himself with the aid of this heavy armor. Elder Feng gained a new perspective on Wu Dao from this, but he still couldn't figure out why.

Xu Yi was not obliged to offer Elder Feng any explanation on this. But looking at the confusion in Elder Feng's eyes, Xu Yi decided to show off a little bit.

"Well, this armor has been tied around my body for about three months now. In the first three days, I was sleepless due to the pain it brings. On

the fourth day, there was edema [1] all over my body. My muscles and bones were all broken as they couldn't bear the weight of this armor. I couldn't walk properly until two months later. Now, I am already in the peak state of a forged body and this armor has turned into a useless prop for me." As he finished speaking, he also finished the removal of his armor. He threw the armor aside, which was quickly buried deep into the weeds.

The weight of this armor had multiplied Xu Yi's own weight several times. Once it was removed, he felt like his body was as light as a feather.

Elder Feng was absolutely stunned, he never expected Xu Yi to be such a powerful cultivator. At the beginning of their fight, he didn't even consider Xu Yi to be a threat. Because Xu Yi was an inexperienced newcomer in Wu Dao, even if Xu entered the peak state of a forged body, Elder Feng was confident in defeating him.

However, seeing the events in front of his eyes, Elder Feng's view towards Xu Yi was turned upside down. He began to doubt his own ability.

How could he capture this monster-like enemy?

Now, Xu Yi had even removed his armor, which would certainly help him multiply his already fast speed. Elder Feng knew, in the stage of a forged body, they compete for speed and strength. These two elements were the key determinants in a fight. And only sometimes, techniques might also play a role. Taking his Tranquil Fist as an example, if the enemy was less defensive than Xu Yi, it'd be a fatal one.

However, there were no shortcuts in cultivating Wu Dao. Elder Feng's

Tranquil Fist might have been a smart move, but far from a wise one. As the strength that was required for this technique was too much for his body to endure, which in turn made it detrimental to his long-term cultivation.

Now, Elder Feng had actually already become weaker compared to several minutes ago. However, disregarding everything else, he tried to make every possible effort to kill Xu Yi, and pushed out another Tranquil Fist. Soon after, he was thrown backwards by the enormous strength he used.

Seeing that not Xu Yi, but rather he himself was being hurt, he decided that there was only one thing left he could do, run!

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[1]: Edema is an abnormal accumulation of fluid in the interstitium, located beneath the skin and in the cavities of the body which can cause severe pain.

## Chapter Nine - Pursuit

Realising he had no chance to turn the table, Elder Feng decided that the best course of action was to flee. Since he was not able to capture Xu Yi, even if he went back to the Zhou Family, he would be ill-treated. So he ran away, leaving Junior Zhou behind.

The Tranquil Fist was merely a bravado and Xu Yi had already seen through this trick.

With hundreds of kilograms of weight removed, Xu Yi ran like a thread of smoke. Before Elder Feng could lift his feet, Xu Yi had already appeared in front of him. Without any hesitation, Xu Yi threw his fist towards Elder Feng. The strength was more than tripled after the removal of his armor, and you could even feel the surrounding air quietly vibrate.

Unfortunately, Xu Yi failed to hit Elder Feng, as the latter jumped up in the air and shrunk his body like a turtle. However, the momentum of the fist caused lancinating pain on the surface of Elder Feng's skin.

Though Elder Feng narrowly managed to escape this blow, he knew what was bound to happen to him. He understood that, right now, in terms of speed, Xu Yi was peerless. Leaving only defeat for him.

Since he had no possibility to escape, Elder Feng played his final trump card – a long and thin sword. He wielded the sword and aimed it at Xu Yi's incoming fist. Xu Yi didn't even dodge this attack, and continued his fist's attack until it rested on Elder Feng's left shoulder. The cutting edge

of the sword had scratched the surface of Xu Yi's fist, dealing no real damage. Elder Feng, however, was knocked down, together with two nearby trees, due to the immense power of Xu Yi's blow.

When Elder Feng was about to stand back up, Xu Yi stamped his feet upon his face. As soon as Elder Feng lied motionless under the great pressure, Xu Yi started to ceaselessly punch him. In order to kill Elder Feng once and for all, Xu Yi didn't give him any chance to fight back. After a storm of blows, the body of Elder Feng had become soft and slack.

The place where Elder Feng lied, soon became a big hole, as deep as one's leg. Surely, this was the result of Xu Yi's continuous blows against Elder Feng. It was true that the latter was, the same as Xu Yi, in the peak state of a forged body, he also possessed ox-like skin and iron bones. But, by Xu Yi's ruthless and crazy attacks, even a real iron ball would be beaten into a flat disc.

Xu Yi stood up with great satisfaction – as Elder Feng's head was deeply buried into the soil, bruises all over his body, showing no sign of life.

The experienced Elder Feng was killed by a newcomer in Wu Dao, Xu Yi was rather proud of himself. This was proof of his ability, with which he could march a step further towards his revenge. He bend down and searched all over Elder Feng's body, finally, he harvested ten gold coins.

Holding one coin in his hand, Xu Yi stared at it for quite a while. He then blew against the coin and put it beside his ear – instantly, waves of soothing sounds could be heard, just like Buddhism Music. Because of the sound, Xu Yi's poker face changed into a smile, with the corners of his mouth slightly raising up.

Xu Yi had already heard of these gold coins. As far as he knew, currency was categorized into two groups. One was for the ordinary people, like the bronze coins and the silver Yuan bao, these were exactly what Xu Yi got from his job as a storyteller. While the other was for Wu Dao cultivators, the dominating party, including gold coins (or gold Yuan bao) and gold discs (an ancient currency).

Without gold coins, Xu Yi had no access to the precious herbs needed in cultivation. Before, he could only use some oolong herb, which he bought from villagers, to revitalize his strength. In this world only gold coins were recognized as a legitimate currency to exchange for the best herbs.

Now, with these ten gold coins, Xu Yi was able to buy the herbs he deeply desired. He quickly tucked the coins into the bag around his waist. Collecting the thin and long sword nearby, Xu Yi put great pressure on it and bended it in the shape of an arc, but surprisingly, it bounced back without any damage being done to the blade. It was a resilient sword, which would be of great help in battle. So Xu Yi decided to take it with him and moved on.

When Xu Yi rushed back to where Junior Zhou was supposed to be, he found nothing but the bodies of the servants. He predicted that Junior Zhou wouldn't make it far in such a short period of time. So he climbed to a higher vantage point and in the northwest, he spotted a man on horseback, galloping as fast and far away from him as possible. Xu Yi deducted that this must be Junior Zhou, who whipped the horse, impatiently, in an attempt to escape.

Right now, Junior Zhou was as terrified as a rabbit, hastily running away. He had to get rid of Xu Yi as quickly as possible, out of fear that Xu Yi would otherwise take away his life.

Knowing that Junior Zhou was seriously injured, Xu Yi was confident in capturing him. What he needed right now was a horse. So he quickly searched around the previous battlefield and found a horse standing beside some thick bushes.

“Though most of the horses have died in the previous battle, this one was smart enough to escape the chaos.” A happy Xu Yi thought and then, without any further delay, he jumped onto the horse’s back and pursued Junior Zhou.

In the middle of the pursuit, Xu Yi suddenly took out his sword and stabbed it into the carotid artery of the horse. Oddly enough, there was no bleeding on the horse’s neck and the speed of the horse was even multiplied several times.

Since Xu Yi was in the peak stage of a forged body, he was almost a professional in the knowledge of the relationship between qi, blood, bones and organs.

When the horse was running, the qi and blood would surge and the bones would vibrate. Xu Yi selected the best position to stab in, in order to unleash the true potential of the horse.

Initially, Xu Yi was not quite sure if this stab would make the horse run faster or kill it, because it was only theoretically correct. But when the sword stabbed into the neck, the outcome was astonishing.

On the contrary, Junior Zhou whipped the horse too frequently and too harshly, leaving blood all over the back of his horse. Thus, the speed of the running horse became slower and slower.

A surge of anger and hatred bursted out underneath his arrogant self-esteem.

"How can the powerless Xu Yi be this strong? He is supposed to be a dumb clown, for us to toy with. The reason why we let him live until today is because we've never considered him a threat. Unexpectedly, he dares to cut my arm off! I will get him punished for what he has done to me." Junior Zhou murmured to himself. He imaged how he would torture Xu Yi with all the brutal corporal punishments available. Thinking of this, he grew more and more excited.

However, the clip-clopping sound behind Junior Zhou made him quickly feel frightened again, almost making him fall off his horse. Xu Yi was quickly closing in on him!

Junior Zhou suddenly became wilted, like a flower at dusk. The hatred was overlapped by horror. He even trembled a little bit. "Elder Feng has failed to kill him!" He was so scared, that he kicked the belly of the horse to make it run faster.

At this very moment, Xu Yi's horse was too tired to go any further, as it crashed onto the ground. Looking back, Junior Zhou found a string of hope once again and laughed loudly: "Xu Yi, listen, I swear to skin you alive and extract your bones!"



Xu Yi didn't pay much heat to these words, as he quickly stood up and pursued Junior Zhou like a bolt of lightning. Out of sheer terror, Junior Zhou actually peed his pants. He whipped and kicked the horse like crazy, trying desperately to escape Xu Yi's close pursuit.

# Chapter Ten - A Grand Feast Of Killing

Editors Corner :

I've been told that we should be translating in the past tense instead of present tense.

Starting this chapter the novel will be in past tense and I'll work my way back over the weekend, early next week, to change the other chapters to past tense as well. Our apologies for any caused inconvenience :)

Ps. Claire says "Hi~~!! Love"

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In reminiscence of his beloved parents and his loyal dog, Xu Yi couldn't help but think of launching a grand feast of killing on the Zhou Family. Though it used to simply be a long-hidden hallucination for Xu Yi, now revenge was only a single step away.

Junior Zhou did his utmost to escape, riding on the horse, While Xu Yi ran without horse, yet he was still faster. Soon, they were only several meters apart. Junior Zhou was desperately whipping the horse, like an offshore fish fluttering its fins helplessly.

Never in his wildest dreams did Junior Zhou realise that Xu Yi's ability in Wu Dao was so advanced. Even Elder Feng, their most-experienced servant, fell short of Xu Yi.

Junior Zhou would probably never know, that it was due to the help of

the heavy armor that Xu Yi had improved his ability faster than others. This heavy armor was an innovative technique invented by Xu Yi himself. Since Xu Yi took the armor off, he felt as if he was as light as smoke. Thus chasing Junior Zhou became a piece of cake.

Now, they were almost on top of each other. Sensing that the situation was quickly worsening, Junior Zhou decided to jump off his horse, which was already vomiting white foam because of the harsh whipping.

He then fled towards the nearby peach forest, from where a group of man, with ragged clothing, was approaching. As these people were moving forward, Junior Zhou almost bursted into tears of happiness, because they were all servants of the Zhou Family, who were to be sent to work in the mines.

Walking closer, the servants also recognised their young master. When they were about to kneel down to him, he yelled at them: "Go and stop that bastard! In turn, I will reward you with 100 taels [1] of silver!"

Upon hearing this, the group cheerfully rushed towards Xu Yi. Apart from obedience, the reward was their key motivation. Even if it was divided by the whole group, they would still gain more than 10 taels of silver respectively. Junior Zhou knew what these servants really wanted, as their yearly earning was less than 10 taels of silver. Some of these servants knew Xu Yi well – the skinny storyteller from Xu village. They certainly didn't realize that danger was looming, because today's Xu Yi was no longer the Xu Yi they all knew.

Regardless if they were servants or masters, anyone related to the Zhou Family would be Xu Yi's enemy. The hatred towards the Zhou Family was imbedded into each and every cell of his body, he would show absolutely

no mercy towards the Zhou Family!

Among the group of servants, the two fastest ones were soon decapitated by Xu Yi. Their remaining bodies being thrown high up in the air. The rest of the group was also quickly severely beaten up, with their bones broken and pools of blood all over the place.

Junior Zhou's strategy, however, wasn't to stop Xu Yi, but to postpone the latter's chase. This way, he would've enough time to run away. Obviously, these servants were not on the same level as Xu Yi. The only thing they could help Junior Zhou with, was to interrupt Xu Yi's chasing momentum.

Eventually, Junior Zhou arrived at the doorstep of the mansion of the Zhou Family, which has been prosperous for the span of two generations. Now, after some expansion, it has become the most luxurious and commodious house in the vicinity.

A bird's eye view would say that, within the mansion of Zhou Family, there were numerous buildings with exquisitely sculptured cornices and girders. It was a true feast for the eye.

Junior Zhou, however, didn't pay attention to all of this as he hurried to the doorway. Here he stepped across the threshold, looking as if this is the step that took him out of hell and into heaven. Where, before this step, he looked like a drowning mouse, now he was quickly regaining his confidence.

"Haha...Come in with me!" Junior Zhou laughed out loudly.

In the spacious arms drill field, clusters of hangers-on [2] were practicing the forged body. Upon hearing what was happening at the doorway, they came rushing towards Junior Zhou, like a swarm of fish.

For these pickthanks [3], it was a golden opportunity to show off and get some rewards from their master. They all stood in front of Junior Zhou, in a protective manner, and were prepared to fight against Xu Yi.

Among the roughly one hundred hangers-on, only Elder Feng had obtained the peak state of a forged body.

After all, unlike Zhou Daoqian (Junior Zhou's uncle), Junior Zhou's family main interest was their mining business. They didn't have to, or probably couldn't afford to, invite large numbers of cultivators who had already achieved the peak state of a forged body. In fact, Elder Feng was personally assigned by Zhou Daoqian under the request of Junior Zhou's father.

During these years, the chances for Elder Feng to fight had been rather slim. Most of his time was spent teaching, or guiding, the hangers-on while they were cultivating. It is fair to say that Junior Zhou, together with his hangers-on, were ignorant of the remarkable difference between the peak state and the normal state of a forged body.

- Bang! Bang! Bang!-

The three strongest hangers-on soon formed a trio battle array – fists, swords and spears came from all directions towards Xu Yi. All of a sudden, Xu Yi evaded with a high jump, kicking on their shoulders. With the great strength of this kick, the three hangers-on were all smashed

into many pieces, while their blood was flooding the surroundings.

In terms of strength and speed, Xu Yi wasn't afraid of these hangers-on of the Zhou Family. He could easily squash them, like they were rotten apples.

What was happening right now, was mind-boggling to Junior Zhou, and he quickly came to the conclusion that he'd underestimated his enemy. Looking around, no one was competent to fight with Xu Yi. This left Junior Zhou half dead with fright.

Out of sheer panic, Junior Zhou ran towards the doorway. As soon as he arrived at the copper gate, Xu Yi kicked his feet onto the ground as he rushed towards Junior Zhou. Without any hesitation, Xu Yi stabbed into the heart of Junior Zhou, which nailed him to the gate.

The long sword left by Elder Feng was so resilient, that it didn't break; instead, it penetrated into the copper gate. You could image the picture of Junior Zhou, as he was nailed against the gate by a sword that was pierced through his chest as it also penetrated into the gate.

At the same time, Junior Zhou's father, who was wearing a Taoist robe, together with their steward, had all turned speechless. They were holding the accounting book, walking peacefully through the courtyard, and were stuck in the middle of their discussion, like a pair of waxwork.

Xu Yi instantly collected a broadsword from the ground and cut off Junior Zhou's head. He then turned around and beheaded Junior Zhou's father, who was about to flee. Xu Yi held the two heads together, as he bound them by tying their hair into a knot. Finally, the two heads were

hung around Xu Yi's waist, as trophies of a great triumph.

The rest of the hangers-on and servants crazily rushed towards Xu Yi, who had no choice but to continue fighting. Even though they came in large numbers, Xu Yi wasn't the slightest bit afraid of them. In the past two years, Xu Yi had been fed up with their endless insults. Fortunately, he translated this negative energy into unimaginable strength. Now, his heart was as hard as a rock. The only thing he cared about was revenge.

Xu Yi deserted the broadsword. Instead, he waved his fists in this battle. As he realised that, with his forged body, the sharpest weapon was his fist and body.

Xu Yi utilized every part of his body in the fight and several minutes later, corpses were piling up and blood was flowing like a small river. Many of the servants started to run away. Luckily for them, Xu Yi had no more interest in killing. Instead, he went directly to the garden. On his way to the garden, he encountered a girl servant and captured her.

The mansion of the Zhou Family turned out to be in total chaos. The smell of oil, fire and blood had all mixed together.

Now, Xu Yi was in the study of Junior Zhou's father. He guessed that this was the place where the most precious things were preserved. Surely, he wouldn't come out empty handed.

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[1]: Taels: Unit of measurement in ancient times. 1 Tael is equal to about

38 grams.

[2]: Hangers-on: Here, it refers to those potential talents in Wu Dao employed by the Zhou Family, but they are different from servants. They will contribute their parts whenever their master needs them.

[3]: Pickthanks: Old word for the better-known term 'lackey'.



# Chapter Eleven - Plunder

Since Xu Yi got the ten golden discs from Elder Feng, he wouldn't appreciate mundane items anymore.

Therefore, Xu Yi directly went for the study of Junior Zhou's father, instead of the warehouses. It was common sense that the most valued of things would be hidden somewhere in the study or bedroom, rather than the warehouse. At this moment, Xu Yi had decided to take a shot to see what he could get.

Needless to say, the study was huge. If you would put a couple of horses in it, they'd enjoy running around freely, not limited by space. All the features here were antique and exquisite. The desk was made of Jinsi Nanmu [1], and an incense burner was decorated with a blend of silver and gold that was beautifully sculptured on the surface. The room was filled with the welcoming smell from the aroma of the inflaming sandalwood in the burner.

Rummaging through the drawers and chests, Xu Yi eventually discovered a dozen of priceless calligraphies and paintings. Only a piece of them would be enough to financially support an ordinary person throughout his entire life.

However, Xu Yi had no big ambitions for this worldly wealth.

- Boom, Boom, Boom -

Xu Yi slammed his fists against the walls of the study, in an attempt to discover a hidden crevice, or perhaps even a door. Eventually the walls were riddled with differently sized holes. Looking around, Xu Yi hoped that he would find something special for himself. Fortunately, deep beneath the left wall, Xu Yi spotted a red wooden box, in which he found two extremely thick gold discs, which emanated a deep red glow.

Out of curiosity, Xu Yi put one gold disc on his palm, calculating its weight – it should be roughly a hundred taels he deduced from this. He stared at them for a couple of seconds, before he quickly tucked them into his bag.

When Xu Yi was about to discard the box, at the bottom, he noticed a wax-sealed envelope. The envelope had to be something confidential he thought, as he quickly tore the envelope open and pulled a letter out.

This was a rather long letter from Junior Zhou's father to Zhou Daoqian. To save time, Xu Yi thumbed through the letter so that he could skip the nonsense and he quickly obtained the essential information. In the letter, Junior Zhou's father implored Zhou Daoqian to persuade the Peak Tower to increase their dividends in certain mineral veins.

The letter also said that the two gold discs were supposed to be tribute money for the Peak Tower. The Zhou Family would contribute tributes to the Peak Tower once every three years.

"For every three years! The two gold discs were actually the accumulation of wealth of three whole years! Luckily, I don't care about the Peak Tower or the traitor Zhou Daoqian... These are now mine!"

Even the very thought of the name of Zhou Daoqian made Xu Yi furious, his desire for revenge would flare up whenever he heard it. He held the letter in the fire of a nearby candle and after it caught fire, he threw it against the wooden window. In a twinkling, the whole room was on fire.

The blowing wind and the roaring flames made a perfect match, which quickened the collapse of the Zhou Family's grand mansion. A couple of minutes later, the whole building had turned into an ocean of fire. The once grandiose mansion turned out to be an inferno.

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At this moment, a group of people were marching towards the Zhou Family estate; they were approximately five kilometers away.

In front of the group was a young man in white clothing, whose appearance was frighteningly similar to Junior Zhou's. The sword hung on his waist was decorated with colorful germs and the horse he rode on, was one head taller than the others, the fur of which was pure, without any parti-color.

The blue sky and white clouds reflected in the billowy water of the Evil Dragon River. The plants were flourishing on the Hui Yin Mountain, through which the wind gently blew, bringing the pure smell of nature. The man in white clothing was inspired by this beautiful scenery and chanted: “朝朝翠山下 (I come down from the emerald green mountain, day after day.)”

“How poetic it is!” Magistrate Wu, who was behind the young man in white clothing, clapped his hands.

“You are distinctive in appearance, while your talents are also impressive. What makes you even more extraordinary, is that you have already obtained the peak state of a forged body at such a young age. You deserve to be the inheritor of Zhou Daoqian.” Wu continued.

“You flatter me, Uncle Wu. I’ve heard from my father that back when you were a student in Guanan, your talent in poem was rivalless. Look now, twenty years later, you’ve become the magistrate of a country. You are destined to be a genius.” The young man in white clothing replied politely.

Magistrate Wu twiddled his beard and smiled.

Up until now, the identity of the young man in white clothing was self-evident. He was the second son of Zhou Daoqian – Zhou Shirong.

The purpose of their return to Guanan was two-folded. Firstly, they would pay a visit to their relatives – Junior Zhou’s family. Secondly, the more important one, they would collect the tributes from their relatives, that was derived from the profits of the mineral veins. As the three-year deadline would soon expire, the Peak Tower had started urging them to hand in the tributes as quickly as possible.

However, the journey from the Peak Tower to Junior Zhou’s family was rather long and rugged. Zhou Daoqian wouldn’t take any risk in losing the tributes, so he had deployed his son to escort this group.

Magistrate Wu was an old friend of Zhou Daoqian, they had encountered each other long before the latter was admitted to the Peak

Tower. They used to be classmates in Guanan.

Nowadays, Wu Dao was not only prosperous but also diversified. Numerous new schools and prominent families were quickly emerging because of Wu Dao.

In the old days, when Zhou Daoqian's talent in Wu Dao wasn't yet discovered, his only ambition was to learn well and obtain an official rank. Daoqian, together with other students at the time, established the "Club of King Ming" (in order to pay tribute to the king). Magistrate Wu, who was one of the club members, was very talented in literature, while Daoqian's martial art ability far surpassed that of Wu's. In terms of social status, Wu was overshadowed by Daoqian, as one's ability in Wu Dao was the benchmark of social recognition.

Because of this relationship, Zhou Daoqian had asked Wu to join the mission.

Even though the Peak Tower was already one of the three most prominent schools in Guanan and its authority was undeniable. However, they still needed the help of local officials to serve as lubricants in the operation of their missions. Government officials represented absolute authority, and local civilians trusted them more than members from the Peak Tower. Magistrate Wu, for instance, who was only a local official with a rather low rank, had much more influence over the local issues.

Indeed, Magistrate Wu was excited when Zhou Daoqian invited him to join the escort. Due to his presence in the group, the journey was rather successful, as nothing unexpected had happened.

As Zhou Shirong and Magistrate Wu were busy exchanging flattery, a cloud of smoke was slowly ascending. As they spotted the smoke, they stopped in the middle of their conversation. Shirong whipped his horse, making it jump high enough to see what was happening in the distance. Suddenly, his face turned ghastly pale.

Judging from Shirong's face, Wu's bouncing heart jerked for a second, as he consciously knew a crisis was imminent. Taking a step further, he saw where the smoke came from. And he was quite sure that it was the Zhou estate that was on fire, because no other buildings in the vicinity would have the same magnitude of damage.

As a distinguished family in the local area, the Zhou Family was the gathering place for local celebrities, including Magistrate Wu. Right now, the place where this dominant family stood, was covered with black smoke and raging flames.

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[1]: Jinsi Nanmu: an extremely expensive wood for making furniture. In ancient times, furniture made of this wood is a symbol of prosperity.

## Chapter Twelve – An Unexpected Attack

Magistrate Wu whipped his horse and yelled: “Go and put the fire out!”

But suddenly, Shirong grabbed the halter of Wu’s running horse. The grab was so energetic that the horse was pulled backwards, without a chance to struggle. Everyone was shocked by the unexpected but vigorous movement of Shirong. This was especially true for Wu, whose face turned ghastly pale.

“The fire is already beyond control. Even if we put it out now, there would be nothing left. It’ll be better to let it burn out.” Shirong responded with a chilly tone. His face turned sinister as he continued: “Ma Zhao, go and kill all the people in the vicinity.”

“Yes, Your Excellency!”

Magistrate Wu couldn’t believe his own ears, how could Shirong act so indifferently towards Junior Zhou’s family? They were relatives!

“It seems like there are countless of people moving to and fro, they are most likely trying to put the fire out, rather than looting the mansion. This is my administrative region, how can I allow him to kill these people so imprudently?” Wu thought to himself and vacillated between two choices – either to comply with Shirong’s command or to restrict him from doing so.

Looking at the indecisive Wu, Shirong raised his voice: “What’s the use of these people? It’s their negligence that triggered that fire, plus, at this

stage they won't be able to save the situation. Why shouldn't we just kill them all?"

"Daoqian is no longer the same person I used to know. He has already become one of the four most distinguished directors of Peak Tower. Now, his son is determined to kill these people, but I'd be able to successfully discourage him from doing so. However, if I did so, Daoqian may breed enmity with me because of it." Magistrate Wu weighed the pros and cons of his next step. Eventually, he calculated it would bring him no benefits if he went against Shirong.

"Kill them all! Zhao (the head constable), please lead your team and coordinate with Mr. Ma in killing these people!" Wu finally shouted, sternly.

Immediately, the whole group positioned themselves in a battle state and then the noise of clip-clopping and the sound of the unsheathing of swords could be heard throughout the surrounding mountains.

It suddenly struck Wu that Junior Zhou and his father were probably already dead. As a local magistrate, he had been through a dozen of tragedies similar to this one, and he was almost certain that this must've been an orchestrated crime, rather than a careless accident.

"I'm afraid your Uncle might already have been killed in the roaring fire..." Wu told Shirong in a euphemism tone.

"Our destiny lies in the hands of the gods. My uncle is already in his fifties and he enjoyed the most part of his life in prosperity. It is not regrettable for him to die at this age. As for my younger cousin, he is the



good-for-nothing parasite of my family. He always gets caught up in messy situations and lets his family worry about solving these situations for him. For someone like him, the scum of my family, death is the best choice." Shirong replied emotionless.

Magistrate Wu was astounded by what Shirong said. He never thought that Shirong's heart would be as cold as marble towards the misfortune of his uncle's family.

"Who can be audacious enough to commit such a disgraceful crime against our family? This is bringing shame to my entire family." Shirong murmured to himself with a distorted expression.

These words confused Wu even more, "You don't even care about the death of your uncle, then why do you show such hatred towards the murderer?"

"Even the dog from our family is treated with respect. How dare this guy set fire to my uncle's family's mansion? I swear to capture him alive and let him pay the price!" Shirong grinded his teeth and said with extreme anger.

Out of sheer bewilderment, Wu didn't know what to say.

...

A man with plain clothing was running hastily in the west, in a second, he appeared in front of Shirong's group. He tripped over his own feet and cried: "Your Excellency! You've finally arrived! Our master... he... he... he

has been..."

Several minutes before, Wu was worried that the raging flames would destroy any and all forms of evidence. However, now a servant from Junior Zhou's family had successfully escaped from the wild fire and he could probably offer some clue to how this mysterious disaster had happened. Therefore, Wu jumped off his horse and helped the man up, before he urgently inquired: "Who did this? What happened over here?"

"It was me!", - Boom! -

Without any warning, the man in plain clothing punched Magistrate Wu in his face. Blood spilled all over the place, as Wu's head had been almost flattened.

No doubt, this man was Xu Yi. After he heard the clip-clopping of the horses, he chased after this sound. To get more information of whom these horse-riders were, Xu Yi then climbed to the top of a tall tree and found out that it was a group of people who were all wielding swords. When he fixed his eyes on the face of the guy in the front, his blood pressure quickly surged. The man who led the group looked strikingly similar to Junior Zhou.

Who could he be?

Xu Yi was well known with his enemy, the Zhou Family. They were split up in two branches, one was led by Junior Zhou's family, while the other was led by Daoqian.

Although, Xu Yi had never met Shirong, after some analysis, he had come to the conclusion that the man who led this group was the son of the disgraceful Daoqian.

It was justifiable to say that Daoqian was the main trigger of Xu Yi's revenge plan. It was Daoqian who had plotted the collapse of the Xu Family. Hence, Xu Yi's hatred towards Daoqian was as deep as the ocean.

Xu Yi, of course, was not a reckless revenger. He knew, that at this stage, if he directly went for Daoqian, it would be like throwing an egg against a rock. But at this moment, his son was right in front of him, which posed a golden opportunity for Xu Yi. If he killed Daoqian's son, Daoqian would certainly suffer from the death of his son.

Driven by this motive, Xu Yi got down from the tree and went to a secluded place where he made a temporary tomb for his ancestors and lighted three sticks of incenses. He then knelt down in front of the tomb and untied the two heads (Junior Zhou and his father) as sacrifice for his ancestors. A few minutes later, Xu Yi stood up and kicked the two heads into the flaming fire.

As Xu Yi was on his way to Shirong's group, he decided not to underestimate Shirong, after all, he was the son of Daoqian. Unknown to the true ability of Shirong, Xu Yi acted rather cautiously. To be honest, he was not quite assured whether he would be able to defeat Shirong or not.

Since no one in the group had met him before, Xu Yi disguised himself as a servant from Junior Zhou's family. By doing so, on the one hand, he could get close to the group without their suspicion; on the other hand, he could attack them unexpectedly.

Magistrate Wu was killed by Xu Yi almost instantly. Without hesitation, Xu Yi then used up all his strength and threw his fist at Shirong, in an attempt to quickly finish this traitor as well. When his fist flew towards the surface of Shirong's white clothing, his body suddenly disappeared.

Xu Yi's backbone was slightly numbed by the shock, he couldn't believe his eyes – as the speed and strength exerted on his fist just now, was the best he could release. Therefore, he was a little bit discouraged and started to doubt himself. Suddenly, he felt like he was being stabbed by a thousand needles, as a strong force of qi was quickly approaching his back.

## Chapter Thirteen – Achilles' Heel

Xu Yi had already entered the peak state of a forged body, with ox's skin and iron-bones. Theoretically, even the sharp sword could not pierce into his skin. However, Shirong's fist still managed to bring immense pain to Xu Yi's body.

He couldn't imagine just what would've happened to him, if he had failed to escape Shirong's fist. His body would probably have exploded within a second.

Out of sheer horror, Xu Yi swiftly crawled under the belly of the white horse. He curled himself up, as he felt shivers going down his spine and cracking sounds in the air around him.

The massive strength of Shirong's fist overwhelmed Xu Yi so immensely, that he could feel his heart was bouncing like a ball inside his chest, ready to jump out. Now, he admitted that the previous plan to kill Shirong, was naïve and overconfident.

Nevertheless, Shirong was also shocked by Xu Yi's nimble escape from his fist. He could instantly tell Xu Yi's cultivation progress. From his experience, within the Peak Tower, not even those half a step away from an ocean of qi could evade this fist of his. Xu Yi had already distinguished himself from those who were in the same level as him.

Xu Yi didn't pay much attention to the pondering look on Shirong's face, as a brilliant self-protective strategy had appeared in his mind. During these years, Xu Yi's survival skills had improved a lot. He was always resourceful whenever he was on the edge of death. Xu Yi pinched

hard in the belly of the white horse, making it screech and prance. Then, the white horse suddenly rushed away, dragging Xu Yi along.

By grabbing onto the dangling halter, Xu Yi managed to jump on the horse's back and immediately kicked the horse. Seconds later, Xu Yi turned around and found that Shirong was only tens of meters away from him.

It was almost dusk and the wind was blowing strongly throughout the mountains. Xu Yi unceasingly whipped the horse, making it run faster and faster. Despite the fact that Xu Yi was not specialized in riding, he managed to control the speed of the horse. As he was in the peak state, he could integrate his own strength with the horse and make it go even faster.

The white horse itself was also a rare species that had extraordinary speed - probably twice as much as a normal horse.

As Xu Yi enjoyed the speed of the horse, when he suddenly felt a gush of air coming from behind. Shock filled Xu Yi's eyes, as he looked behind him.

Shirong flew in the air by stepping from one tree top to the next. It was not a big deal to chase Xu Yi over such a short distance. Immediately, he stretched his palms and there emerged a stream of dense qi, spiraling in the air.

Soon, swirling wind was hovering around Xu Yi, ready to suck him in.

Never in his wildest dreams had Xu Yi seen such magic power, he nearly even blacked out. Trying every means possible to survive, Xu Yi pedaled so hard on the horse-saddles that it eventually broke into many pieces. The great strength of the wind made the horse slant over to one side. Thus, Xu Yi was forced to crouch on the horse's back to avoid being thrown off.

The horse was a perfect shield for Xu Yi, crouching on it, he no longer felt the furious wind around him as much. Hardly had Xu Yi recovered from the shock, when he began wondering about the power of Shirong's fist. As far as he understood, in order to release the strength of any fist, one must directly hit an object, rather than hit in the open air. However, just now, the swirling wind caused by Shirong's fist was powerful enough to end his life. This, for Xu Yi, was a cognition breakthrough in terms of Wu Dao.

The strength in the air was originated, not from the speed of the fist; but rather, it was from the pure strength in the palm of Shirong. For such a lethal fist, it was hard to imagine, even for those in the peak state of a forged body, what would happen to them.

Xu Yi predicted, with confidence, that Shirong must've already entered the realm of an ocean of qi – the same level as his Sifu – Liao Chen.

Suddenly, Shirong leaped onto the running horse. Now, two people were on the horse's back, which meant that the weight was also doubled, however, the speed of the horse was not affected in the slightest. It ran like a thunderbolt, leaving the mountain's beautiful scenery as a vanishing blurry image.

From a distance, Shirong could be mistaken for a celestial being having descended to this mortal world. However, deep inside, Shirong was fraught with restless indignation.

"No more fighting, I suggest you leave as quickly as possible. You can't compare with me, as you're still lingering in the peak state of a forged body. But, to be honest, I'm quite surprised by your ability to dodge. So I will allow you the honor of taking your own life, rather than being killed by my fist." Shirong ordered Xu Yi, as he slightly raised his dashing eyebrows.

"What a braggadocio!" Xu Yi whispered to himself, before he replied in a calm tone. "Thanks for your mercy. Since I have killed both your cousin and uncle, oh, and burned their mansion as well, you don't want to kill me yourself? Ah, I almost forgot that your ancestors were all servants of my family, no wonder that you are so kind to me. By the way, I also stole two golden discs."

In terms of articulation, Xu Yi was much more proficient than Shirong. Even though there were no dirty words involved, Shirong was deeply insulted.

"Go to hell!" Shirong cursed at Xu Yi.

As Xu Yi was excited over his eloquence, Shirong furiously struck his fist towards Xu Yi. Out of horror, Xu Yi got goose bumps all over his body and jumped off the horse. This horse was an especially big one, which gave Xu Yi the opportunity to not fall off, but rather once again curl up like a ball of thread underneath its belly.



The fist of Shirong was so intense that it left a deep hole on the ground. Fortunately, Xu Yi had successfully dodged this attack by hiding underneath the horse.

“You bastard! I will send you to hell, and let the evil ghosts gnaw on you in death!” Shirong yelled, while his blood pressure was quickly surging, as you could tell from the fluctuating pumps on his temple.

Shirong considered Xu Yi not worthy to talk to, so he kept silent in the beginning. In spite of the fact that it was Xu Yi, who brought such a disaster to Junior Zhou’s family, Shirong didn’t acknowledge his ability. To Shirong, Xu Yi was merely an ant, he just needed to stomp his feet and the ant would turn into powder.

However, he never thought that it would take so long to end Xu Yi’s life. Because the latter had already spotted his Achilles’ heel – the white horse, which was why Xu Yi stuck to the horse throughout the entire fight.

If not for hiding beneath the belly of this horse, Xu Yi would’ve long met his end by Shirong’s ferocious fist. The crackling sounds, that accompanied his fist, were to showcase the immense power behind this attack.

Actually, Shirong changed the direction of his fist at the last moment, to avoid accidental injury to his horse. When compared to killing Xu Yi, the white horse’s well being was much more valuable to him. He would rather waste his strength and hit the air, than injure or possibly even kill his white horse.

Taking advantage of Shirong's Achilles' heel, Xu Yi barely managed to hold onto his life.

## Chapter Fourteen – Battle in the River

“Bastard from the Zhou Family! Stay away from me!” Xu Yi scolded Shirong rampantly, in an attempt to enrage him.

Shirong was about to respond when Xu Yi continued: “I’ll count to three. If you don’t move, I’ll tear a hole in the belly of your dearest horse.”

“If you dare to lay your finger on my horse, you will find your body smashed into pieces!” Shirong shouted with flaming anger.

Knowing that Xu Yi held the horse as a hostage, Shirong reluctantly stepped back, in case Xu Yi would do any harm to his beloved horse.

The white horse was actually a present bestowed by Fairy Yu Qing, the revered founder of Tianshan School. The horse had the nickname “Flying Snow”, which was given by its original master – Fairy Zihan, the most renowned among the third-generation peers of Tianshan School.

Fairy Zihan showed great talents in Wu Dao, which was almost peerless, at least in Guanan. Quite a number of admirers idolized him, including Shirong.

Therefore, Flying Snow meant more than a horse to Shirong, as it represented his idol – Fairy Zihan. If the horse was injured or killed, he would be too embarrassed to face Fairy Zihan.

Xu Yi crawled up on the horse's back and whipped it harshly. The horse dashed into the distance. However, Xu Yi knew it wouldn't end just like this. Since the horse was so precious to Shirong, he wouldn't give up so easily. It was highly likely that he'd trail after him, ready to make a sudden assault.

Being aware of the danger, Xu Yi deliberately turned onto a road with less bushes and trees. This left it impossible for Shirong to secretly hide in them. The horse rushed several kilometers towards the south and only stopped when the Evil Dragon River was reached – this was the longest river in Guanan that flowed all the way into the East Sea.

Xu Yi knew that once he separated from this horse, Shirong would show up from his hiding spot. In other words, as long as he was with the horse, he would be safe. This, to some extent, became a paradox. Should he abandon the horse and confront the danger, or should he stick to the horse endlessly?

It suddenly occurred to Xu Yi, that his only chance to survive lied in this river. After all, he couldn't live forever on the horse's back. He would have to get rid of Shirong sooner or later.

Indeed, as Xu Yi predicted, Shirong was lurking around behind the nearby spruces. When the horse stopped near the river, Shirong was sure that Xu Yi would jump into it, as this was the most expedient way to flee at this moment.

He was patiently waiting for the right time to attack, as he was determined to kill Xu Yi for all the arrogant remarks he had made.

When Xu Yi looked around nervously and was about to move, Shirong bounced into the air as quick as a thunderbolt. He then moved forward like a crawling dragon. In the blink of an eye, he was just several meters away from Xu Yi.

The speed of Shirong's charge was frighteningly swift; the panic-stricken Xu Yi rolled off the horse and crept under the belly in an awkward position.

"Oh, the same trick again?!" Shirong was so outraged that he almost vomited blood. As soon as he pulled back his palms, he saw something shooting out from underneath the horse to the riverbank. "Ah, that must be Xu Yi!"

Moving his fists several times around in the air, Shirong created a momentum of strength powerful enough to shake the ground. Strange enough, the strength came from the ground and rose upwards, which suddenly pushed Shirong's feet and made his body spin several times. As the speed of the spinning got increasingly faster, Shirong flew towards Xu Yi like a roaring hurricane.

Frightened by the appalling movements of Shirong, Xu Yi splashed into the river. At the same time, Fly Snow suddenly fell down with a - thud! -. Shirong was frozen in the middle between the river and his horse. Eventually, he rushed back to his horse and saw that blood kept oozing out from its left leg.

When Xu Yi was under the belly of the horse, he had racked his brains

for a feasible runaway strategy. Finally, he had decided to cut the leg of the horse to win him some time, because he was certain that Shirong wouldn't keep on chasing him, once he saw that his horse was hurt. Besides, since he was currently unable to physically kill Shirong, he felt like he had to settle his grudge some other way. So he decided to hurt Shirong spiritually, by cutting the horse's leg.

"Fxxk!!! You bastard!! I swear to send you to hell and let you stay there forever!"

Shirong roared like a lion - his face was red with surging blood and blue veins protruding in remarkable shapes, suddenly he dashed towards the river. To Xu Yi's terror, when Shirong stepped into the river, he could actually steadily float on the surface, having only his ankles sink into the water. Looking from afar, he resembled a goblin moving afloat the river. Did he actually possess magic power?

Even Shirong had his limits. He was actually wearing worn out shoes, which left his toes exposed. He used his toes to paddle and moved forward like a web-footed aquatic life. As he moved forward, there even emerged foaming whirlpools underneath his feet.

Shirong stared at the water carefully in order to figure out where Xu Yi exactly was. Looking ahead of him, he was searching for the smallest of ripples, which would give away Xu Yi's location.

- Boom! -

Shirong pushed out his palms, which shot out an immense power,

making the water, as well as the air, vibrate with an unsettling sound. It could be analogous to a mini-earthquake. Wave after wave rose up high, throwing countless of fish and shrimps high into the air. When the river eventually calmed down, the dead bodies of the previously 'flying' fish and shrimps, were floating all over the surface of the water.

Soon, after the grand attack, there emerged some muffled groans from deep within the water. Shirong looked down, as the corners of his mouth raised ever so slightly - revealing a rare curve on his usual straight face.

Xu Yi was heavily hit in this bloodcurdling attack, even though he was several meters away from the surface. Thanks to the waters above, which had cushioned the damage, Xu Yi was still alive. Otherwise he would be very much like the dead fish and shrimps around him.

Although, Xu Yi luckily survived from this attack, the injuries he had sustained were extremely severe – with his shoulder blades dented and all the organs in his chest being displaced. He painfully clenched his teeth, avoiding the urge to vomit blood.

Out of desperation, Xu Yi became pessimistic; he blamed the inequality of the world and left his life in the hands of destiny. Eventually, he could only see darkness. As his vision darkened, he also felt how his chest was tightly clenched. Thus, he was unconsciously following the deep undercurrent of the river.

While Shirong floated harmoniously on the water, he had his eyes only slightly opened, anticipating the changes in the river's current, by the touch of his feet. He felt confident that Xu Yi was already dead, or at the very least severely injured. Currently, he was already considering in which way he would insult or punish Xu Yi, once the latter would finally show

his face above the surface.

All that Xu Yi could do at this point, was to stay deep under water. He would rather drown in this river, than being captured by this 'servant'.

Gradually, Xu Yi developed symptoms like tinnitus, protruded eyes and dizziness. He had almost worn out his will and persistence. But at this point, he suddenly felt a swarm of moving shadows approaching towards him.



## Chapter Fifteen – Mu Family

In order to pull himself together, Xu Yi bit the tip of his tongue, letting the bitter pain wake his mind. He then noticed a flock of large carps moving around, foraging for food.

The large carp was one of the specialties of the Evil Dragon River. A grown carp would be roughly three meters long. These species always came in flocks, as they enjoyed collective life. As a dish, the large carp was absolutely a rare delicacy – large carp soup, relished with green onion, was the most popular cuisine - which appeared on the table of prominent officials and eminent personages.

Xu Yi was exhilarated by the appearance of these carps. To him, it was like stumbling across an oasis in a desert. He exerted his last bit of energy, as he paddled his feet and swam towards the largest one.

Meanwhile, on the surface, Shirong felt some ripples in the water. Suddenly, a subtle smile emerged on his face.

“Finally, you can’t hold your breath any longer!” However, when Shirong was about to wave his palms he came to a sudden stop. He felt confused, as he fully opened his eyes to observe what was happening on the surface of the water – ripples were seemingly coming from different directions in the water, making it difficult for Shirong to lock onto his target.

Frustrated by the multiple directions of the ripples, Shirong eventually stretched his palms and aimed at the largest one.

- Bang! Bang! Bang! -

Again, large waves exploded towards the shore. In the end, a single large carp floated towards the surface of the water, with its belly exposed to the sky.

"Xu Yi hasn't surpassed the peak state yet, it takes years to make any concrete breakthrough. As long as he lives in Guanan, he will be caught sooner or later. It's just a matter of time!" Shirong tried to console himself after his fruitless attacks.

Meanwhile Flying Snow was groaning bitterly, as if trying to arouse sympathy for what it had suffered, which made Shirong feel even more agitated.

Meanwhile, deep underwater, Xu Yi grabbed onto the tail of the largest carp and let it drag him along, down the river.

Out of sheer panic, the carp swam like crazy and as it did, the other carps in the flock quickly followed. They swam around like headless chickens, causing even more ripples to appear on the surface.

Eventually, the large carp, together with Xu Yi, swam several hundreds of meters away down the river. Xu Yi eventually managed to crawl on the back of the carp and then closed his eyes. As the carp kept moving deeper down and further away, Xu Yu gradually lost consciousness and left his life in the hands of destiny.

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It was early morning, the sky was blue and a fresh air was lingering around.

In a narrow, yet neat yard, roses were blooming and a five-leaved ivy was climbing up against a wall. Moreover, there were numerous green melons and red fruit dangling on its vein, sending out a refreshing fragrance into the air. The flaming red and vigorous green made this place really a feast for the eyes.

Xu Yi was sitting on the doorsteps, gratefully breathing in the fresh morning air. He wore a blue robe and seemed to be in a rather good mood. Even though his bristly unshaven chin indicated that he was not in a particularly good condition, as he looked rather pale.

"Uncle Xu, get up. It's time for breakfast. Come and enjoy the fried noodles. They're delicious!" A young girl, at preschool age, urged Xu Yi to have breakfast. The girl had a straight nose and a chubby, yet delicate, face. She lifted a cloth bag with her left hand, while she was simultaneously putting crisp fried noodles in her little mouth with her right hand. Funny enough, she had a running nose, and occasionally, she would wipe it with her sleeves.

Hardly had the girl's voice faded away, or an elder man appeared. He had strong muscles and a tall stature, leaving an impression that he most likely possessed some exceptional abilities.

"Autumn, you have been continuously gobbling down those noodles. You were supposed to leave some for your uncle, yet now it seems like

the bag is already empty.” The elder man said jokingly to the little girl.

“Grandpa, you are wrong. There are... five... four... ah, only three left!” Autumn took it seriously, pouting with her little mouth as she even began to cry.

Seeing this, Xu Yi instantly moved over to Autumn and clutched the little girl in his arms. “Grandpa is just joking. Look, what is he holding in his hands?” Xu Yi consolingly said to Autumn.

Autumn slipped away from Xu Yi, running towards her grandpa, her eyes filled with expectation. In his hands she found a bag of steamed buns, with hot vapor spiraling out of the bag and into the air.

“Uncle Mu, goodmorning!” Xu Yi greeted the elder man with a big smile.

As an orphan, as well as a victim of the family revenge, Xu Yi’s previous years of experience had shaped his personality – indifferent and cynical. He would always keep to himself. Even though, when he was telling a story to the villagers, he would occasionally show a smile. However, this was out of survival, rather than happiness.

However, for some reason, Xu Yi really felt at home with this elder man and his granddaughter.

Three days ago, Xu Yi had narrowly escaped from Shirong, by grabbing onto a large carp. Actually, he had almost died at that moment, as his consciousness had been wavering. Luckily, an old fisherman, Uncle Mu,

had netted the large carp, together with Xu Yi.

Uncle Mu had turned out to be a kind-hearted man. When he saw Xu Yi was seriously injured, without saying a word, he carried him home and treated him. Since Xu Yi was in the peak stage of a forged body, his self-healing ability was amazing and after only two days, he had already magically recovered.

In the three-day period of time, they got along with each other like they had been family all their lives – Uncle Mu was a traditional man, who never asked for anything in return whenever he did a favor to others; while Autumn was an adorable girl with a pretty appearance and a child's simplicity.

Staring at the breakfast brought by Uncle Mu and Autumn, Xu Yi was touched by their warm-heartedness. To Xu Yi, it was a strange but comfortable feeling, as if his icebound heart melted a little bit.

After a nice and warm breakfast, Uncle Mu grabbed his fishing net and went out to fish. Autumn hastily snatched a steamed bun and hurried after him, with a backpack on her back.

Xu Yi quite enjoyed this harmonious atmosphere, as if he had already become a member of this family. After the two of them had left, he grabbed a broom and began to tidy up the house. When he finished sweeping, he decided to practice his fists. The qi and blood harmoniously flowing through his body, as if they were integrated with each other, thus creating a momentum of strength that was strong enough to kill a horse. Xu Yi felt refreshed and vigorous. It seemed as if the life-and-death battle against Shirong three days ago, had brought Xu Yi an advanced recovery ability. The more seriously he was hurt, the faster he would fully recover.

He truly possessed a resilient, forged body.

Several minutes later, sweat began rolling down Xu Yi's face. So he decided to take a break and do something else. He walked over to the wall that was surrounding the yard and jumped over it.

The Mu Family was situated in a small outskirts, with a poetic name – Hibiscus Town. It was several miles away from Guanan. Interestingly enough, the town was in the 'dragon's beard' part of the Evil Dragon River (The river was in the shape of a dragon). This bustling small town was a beautiful place to inhabit. The riverside sceneries and the emerald-colored mountains added a touch of elegance to this town.

Hot steam was dancing on the wind, carrying a delicious smell. Xu Yi had arrived at the market street, where merchants were selling all kinds of breakfast food – buns, spring rolls and Shao Mai [1], etc. Wandering around, under the bright sunshine, Xu Yi had never felt so leisurely and comfortable, as if he had been insulated from the outside world for years.

Since Xu Yi was in the peak state of a forged body, his appetite had multiplied, which was why his stomach had been making loud noises all morning. Although the Mu Family generously provided him with three meals a day, Xu Yi was too embarrassed to tell them that it was not enough. So he went to the market street in the hope of finding some delicious food.

Half an hour later, Xu Yi carried a gigantic cloth bag, in which there were various kinds of food. He then walked towards the riverbank, where the branches of the willows were elegantly dancing on the wind.

While enjoying this alluring scenery, Xu Yi suddenly got distracted by a noise several meters away. There he found hundreds of people clustered together, each one of them was strong, with ample qi and blood. Needless to say, they were all cultivators in Wu Dao.

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[1]: Shao Mai or Shumai , it also can be called pork dumplings (although often other types of dumplings could also be filled with pork), is a type of traditional Chinese dumpling.

## Chapter Sixteen – The Iron Lock

Out of curiosity, Xu Yi stepped forward to find out what was happening over there. Eventually, he saw a pyramid-shaped building with a glittering golden plate hanging on the top of the gate – Lecture Room.

“Is it a Lecture Room for Wu Dao?” Xu Yi wondered.

Walking several steps closer, Xu Yi found an introductory essay sculptured on the wall, which narrated the establishment date and purpose, *etc.* Definitely, this kind of essay was tedious, but Xu Yi was quite interested in it.

Actually, the Lecture Room was an official building, established by the Emperor of Yue. He built it in an attempt to narrow the resource gap between rich and poor cultivators. Anyone who was born in a rich family, for instance, would certainly receive the best education in Wu Dao, while those aspiring, yet poor cultivators, could only learn by themselves, without any effective guidance. Therefore, many of the poor cultivators would encounter bottlenecks they weren’t able to overcome, for the long road of cultivation in Wu Dao had many realms that could only be achieved after breaking through a bottleneck.

The Emperor of Yue had built these Lecture Rooms throughout his territory. Though it might’ve only been a political strategy to win credibility among the poor people, it really brought concrete benefits to those sincere Wu Dao cultivators, especially to the newcomers.

Xu Yi felt tears of happiness coming up and was about to cry out in joy, due to the information on this wall inscription.



It was true that Xu Yi had entered the peak state of a forged body, but his theoretical basis for Wu Dao was next to nonexistent. Before, diligence and practice had brought him to this point. However, he never actually knew anything about Wu Dao itself. What he had learned so far was from his Sifu, Liao Chen, who taught Xu Yi out of gratitude. Any rudimentary knowledge or anecdotes in Wu Dao were out of reach for Xu Yi. So he was desperate to learn more!

During the three-day recovery period in the Mu Family, Xu Yi began to consider his future. Right now, there were two main tasks. Firstly, he had to kill Zhou Daoqian. Secondly, he wished to return the scripture to the Heaven-Zen Temple, which was Liao Chen's will.

In order to complete these two tasks, Xu Yi had to improve his cultivation in Wu Dao. He set himself a short-term goal – to surpass the peak state and enter into the next realm – an ocean of qi!

At his current stage, Xu Yi wasn't capable enough to kill Shirong, let alone his father – Daoqian. Therefore, he really hoped that in this Lecture Room he would encounter some experienced mentors. Because right now, Xu Yi was in dire need of a teacher.

...

In the middle of the Lecture Room, there stood a gigantic iron-made lock. Suddenly, a man in plain clothing stepped forward: "The greatest of graticudes to our Emperor for providing us with this Lecture Room, where we can discuss, compete and absorb knowledge of Wu Dao. We're all born mundane, yet our love for Wu Dao will never wither. Let's show our

Emperor that we're worthy of this place! Let's practice ten... no, a hundred times harder than those privileged cultivators!"

After his introductory speech, the man in plain clothing pointed at the iron lock and said: "Let's begin!"

Once he stepped away from the iron lock, a man in green clothing casually walked in front of the giant lock. After he had finished stretching and his warming-up, the man in green clothing grabbed the lock with a loud roar. The muscles on his arms became visible due to the great strength he exerted. As expected, he successfully lifted the lock over his head.

- Hooray! -

The room exploded with exclamations and clapping.

A few seconds later, the lock fell back on the floor with a - thud! -. The man in green clothing bowed to everyone, with his hands folded in front of his chest. Everyone's passion was ignited by this first challenger. After the first there were at least another fifty people who attempted to lift the lock, but only less than half of them managed to lift this iron lock up.

After he had observed for a couple of minutes, Xu Yi figured out that the iron lock was about 250 kilograms in weight, which was exactly the threshold for entering the level of a forged body. Only those who passed the test were qualified to participate in the class.

Later, another ten people volunteered to lift the lock, while only three passed.

The man in plain clothing said: "Anyone else? Time is limited, if there's no one else, we will call it a day. Oh, I have some words to say for those who didn't pass! Never, ever, give up. If you failed this year, try again next year! As long as you never quit, sooner or later, you will be a member of the Lecture Room!"

As soon as the man in plain clothing finished his speech, he casually lifted the lock with his left hand. Everyone was astounded by this show of strength.

"Let me have a try!" Finally, Xu Yi stepped forward.

Now, everyone's attention was focused on Xu Yi, as he was the only stranger here. Hibiscus Town was rather small, so everyone here was familiar with each other. Xu Yi was obviously the only exception, as he had only lived here for 3 days.

"Who the hell is this guy? He's not supposed to be in our Lecture Room."

"Look at you, stranger. You are too skinny, have you really made yourself believe you can lift the iron lock?"

"Boss Gu, this man is not even an inhabitant of our town, please send him away. You know that we don't cultivate with outsiders."

The room was quickly filled with noisy complaints, as if there were

dozens of flies buzzing around. Most of these villagers were far from accomplished in Wu Dao, but they had obtained certain accomplishments in bullying newcomers.

“Hello everyone, let me introduce myself. I’m a passionate cultivator in Wu Dao. I have been cultivating for some time now, but I’ve realised that the further I move forward, the less I know. You know, I’m a man full of questions about Wu Dao, I’m so eager to find these answers. Since we’re all Wu Dao cultivators, why won’t you be so generous as to let me in. Besides, our Emperor founded this building in an attempt to benefit all poor cultivators, regardless of their origins. If you insist in deterring me, I’m afraid you’re going against the will of our Emperor.” Xu Yi gracefully bowed after his persuasive remarks.

Xu Yi was quite articulate in front of so many people. This might’ve something to do with the previous life of Xu Yi’s soul. He used to be a high-ranking commander, whose talents stood out amongst millions upon millions of people.

At the same time, the original Xu Yi (before the new soul transferred had entered into his body) was also talented in various areas, such as history and classics.

The combination of the ‘two’ Xu Yi’s had dramatically boosted his abilities. So it was no wonder that he was so eloquent, despite the fact that most of the people here were hostile towards him.

The man in plain clothing was actually touched by Xu Yi’s remarks, especially when he had mentioned the Emperor of Yue.

He meditated for a while, and then replied, "What a persuasive speech! You are right, we shouldn't expel you from this Lecture Room. But we have rules here, only those who can lift this lock are allowed to join the class. Since you dare to step into this room, I bet you are quite something. So please move ten steps away from the lock, and I will throw the lock towards you. If you don't miss and manage to catch the lock and hold it steadily, then you're welcome to join us!"

On the one hand, Since Xu Yi had mentioned the Emperor, the man in plain clothing was compelled to be generous to him, as he didn't want to hurt the reputation of this Lecture Room. While on the other hand, looking at those furious warriors, he didn't want to displease them either. Therefore, he came up with a win-win solution – to show kindness to Xu Yi, but set a higher bar for him.

Indeed, the man in plain clothing was a well-known figure in this town. That was because he was one of the few in this town, who had achieved the middle state of a forged body. If he threw the lock towards Xu Yi, the momentum of the flying lock, together with its original weight, would certainly exceed 250 kilograms.

Would this newcomer successfully catch the lock, or would he make a fool of himself?

People applauded for the upcoming show, as most of them predicted that Xu Yi would never catch the heavy iron lock, it was simply impossible, at least for them.

## Chapter Seventeen – The Origin of Strength

“Please don’t use all your strength, or I won’t be able to catch it.” Xu Yi whispered to the man in plain clothing, as if it was a real challenge for him.

As requested, Xu Yi retreated ten steps away. He then squatted a little bit, showing a ready pose. He didn’t want to show his true strength, in case the Zhou Family would somehow get wind of it. He acted as if he was intimidated by the test, cautiously waiting for the lock to be thrown.

“Here you go!” The man in plain clothing held the lock with a single hand, and then threw it towards Xu Yi.

With a roar, Xu Yi spread his arms and embraced the incoming lock successfully. However, he retreated several steps due to the impact of the heavy lock. Finally, he steadily held the lock for several seconds, until his face turned a deep red color.

Everyone was taken aback in shock. Xu Yi was a lot stronger than they had originally thought he would be.

“Not bad. Even though you trembled slightly, you did it! As a beginner in the preliminary period of a forged body, your strength is extraordinary. Hey man, welcome! You are in.” The man in plain clothing congratulated Xu Yi.

The pretended nervousness and shivers made the man in plain clothing believe that Xu Yi was just at the beginning stages of Wu Dao. Plus, as far

as he knew, all the students here were mere newcomers to Wu Dao. Anyone who had entered the middle or peak state wouldn't bother to come here. After all, in the Lecture Room, they only provided students with some rudimentary knowledge of Wu Dao.

Nevertheless, Xu Yi was an exception!

"Thank you for your leniency, or I would've been squashed by the weight of that lock." Xu Yi bowed to the man in plain clothing.

"Quick, go to the classroom. Teacher Zhou is a pundit with bad temperament. If you are late, he won't be lenient to you." the man in plain clothing urged Xu Yi.

So Xu Yi ran in the direction the man in plain clothing had pointed him in. When he reached the classroom, he found that all the seats were empty. Actually, all of the students stood in front of a wall, staring at the portraits hanging on it.

There were twenty portraits on the wall, which were considered to be the heroes of Hibiscus Town of the last two hundred years. Most of them had obtained the state of an ocean of qi, which was why everyone here looked up to them. On the wall, their life experience and past glories had all been sculptured, using condensed words. This really encouraged the aspiring new students in Wu Dao, because they could see their future through these idols.

- Dang! -

The door slammed open, before a hoary old man in ragged clothing entered. He swaggered into the classroom, with one hand holding a gourd-shaped wine kettle. Soon, the whole classroom was filled with the fragrance of wine.

The classroom turned chaotic, as the new students started discussing the appearance of their teacher. Obviously, they were disappointed by it. Some of them even sighed to express their dissatisfaction.

Instead of complaining like the others, Xu Yi chose a seat in the front and silently sat there. He actually liked the old man's nature and unrestrained style, which he believed to be the reflection of the old man's advanced ability.

- Bang! Bang! Bang! -

The old man beat the ruler against the iron desk to arouse everyone's attention.

"Hey, cheer up. It's a blessing for you to be in my class. Look at your long faces, oh, this is such a joykill. You little bastards, now I'm no longer in the mood to drink, let alone to teach. You have all let me down. Today, I'll allow you newcomers to ask me only ten questions, once all the questions have been answered, class will be over." Teacher Zhou was infuriated by the students' unfriendly response. He then uncovered the lid of his kettle and gulped like an ox. In contrast with the solemnity in the classroom, Teacher Zhou's behavior was rather undignified.

"As far as I know, anyone in the forged body state, will boast a healthy



and robust body. But look at you, Teacher Zhou, frankly, you are a mere bag of bones. I bet you aren't even a Wu Dao cultivator, are you?" One student rose up and expressed his suspicions towards Teacher Zhou.

Everyone was astounded by the courage of this student. However, the other students couldn't help but agree and soon the whole classroom was chaotic again.

Undeniably, judging from his appearance, it was hard to believe that Teacher Zhou was a cultivator in Wu Dao. But if he really didn't have any achievements in Wu Dao, how would he dare to stand here and impart his knowledge.

Everyone expected Teacher Zhou to be outraged by the impolite student; while on the contrary, he smiled and enjoyed a sip of wine before he replied.

"You know what, when I was cultivating Wu Dao, you were probably still in the womb of your Mummy! Ok, boy, you wasted one question. Anyone else?"

The students were all surprised by Teacher Zhou's response, especially when he counted this as one of the ten questions.

"Quiet, please! No more chaos, or else the class will be over!" Teacher Zhou said, as he was rather annoyed by the noisy chatter.

The students finally sat straight and stopped talking. They knew it was

pointless for them to confront their teacher. They were the forgotten group in society and they lacked the resources to continue on the path of cultivation. Meanwhile, Teacher Zhou was appointed by the government and was supposed to offer them help. It was like a beggar who received some food he didn't really like, but he was afraid to show his preference to the donator. It was exactly the same situation.

Xu Yi stood up and bowed slightly, before gently saying: "I have a question for you, Teacher Zhou. Where lies the origin of our strength?"

The students were embarrassed by Xu Yi's naïve question, because they all knew that your strength came from your body. And the further you cultivated, the stronger your body would become. They blamed Xu Yi for wasting this opportunity with such a dumb question.

Meanwhile, Teacher Zhou was meditating over the question as he put his wine kettle on the desk. He had been a teacher in the Lecture Room for nearly twenty years now, yet no one had ever raised such a question. He pondered for quite some time, trying to come up with an appropriate answer. It truly sounded like a simple question, which everyone could casually provide an answer to. However, when you thought deeper on this question, you would be baffled. You could even say, that the simpler the question was, the harder the answer would be.

"I can't handle this question." He finally replied in a low voice.

His reply made the other students even more bewildered. Given that Teacher Zhou's had twenty years of experience in the Lecture Room, the students chose to trust him. If he was really not able to answer this seemingly easy question, then the question itself was evidently not as simple as they had thought.

“Actually, it’s a good question. Though I don’t know the correct answer, either way, I’ll answer your question based on my personal experience.” Teacher Zhou was actually an honest guy, who didn’t pretend to be well-informed about subjects he knew little about.

“No problem. I’m all ears. I know that we keep gaining strength in the cultivating process of a forged body, but what if we surpassed that stage and reached the highest point – the peak state?” Xu Yi appreciated the straightforwardness of Teacher Zhou and gave some further explanation about his question.

## Chapter Eighteen – Enlightening Remarks

The whole class was silent.

All of the students here were beginners, who only aspired to learn the 'rudimentary knowledge of a forged body', such as techniques, the flow of qi, the most-effective herbs to advanced cultivation, *etc.* Something like the peak state of a forged body, was something they could only dream about. To think what was beyond this realm, was something beyond their comprehension.

However, now that Xu Yi had brought this question up, everyone felt enlightened, as they began thinking of the whole picture of Wu Dao, rather than merely tunnel vision on the state of a forged body.

As cultivators, they all wished to make progress day by day, no one wanted to be left behind. Within the stage of a forged body, the cultivation of the body was the origin of their strength. But what if they finally surpassed this level?

The classroom was silent, as they were all pondering on Xu Yi's seemingly simple, yet difficult question. Teacher Zhou raised his brows a little bit and calmly said with a rare and solemn expression, "I have figured out the general answer to your question. What you seem most curious about, is how to obtain more strength after having reached the peak state of a forged body. Actually, your concern would disappear once you've taken the next step. As you all know, there are four stages to unlock the shackles of this mortal world, the forged body is simply one of these stages. In each stage, we have different techniques to cultivate and gather strength. You know what the four stages are, correct? They're

namely, a forged body, an ocean of qi, the liquidation of qi and a grateful soul. You may see from their names, that they're a reflection of their personal state, either physically or spiritually."

"At the peak state of a forged body, you'll have ox's skin and iron-like bones. The strength you can exert will be equivalent to that of one ox. After you surpass this stage, you'll have entered into the next realm, an ocean of qi. Just as its name implies, the qi in your body will form an ocean in your dantian. You'll be able to fight with your mind, rather than with your hands, or any other part of your body. It'll be an amazing stage. Indeed, in this stage, you'll still need to cultivate your body, but not to strengthen your skin and bones. Instead, you will cultivate your bone marrow into a frost state and your blood into a thick liquid."

"As for the last two stages, I don't possess any definite answers. To tell you the truth, I haven't reached these stages myself, so...it is beyond me. However, if you like, I could give you a simple overview." He paused for a second as he looked at Xu Yi and then continued. "The so called liquidation state, I'm fairly certain that it refers to the liquidation of your qi. You will train the organs inside your chest, forging them into a more resilient state. Finally, a grateful soul is the last realm, it represents the end of the limitations of your physical body and you will start to absorb the energy from the heavens. You have to be absolutely devout in this state, in order to successfully purify your soul."

The detailed explanation by Teacher Zhou, though combined with evidence and predictions, was enlightening learning material for the students. Xu Yi was especially overwhelmed, as the doubts that had nagged him all this time had been like an insurmountable mountain, but now it had suddenly collapsed.

For a while, silence dominated the classroom, as the students were

“digesting” the wide-ranged knowledge, that was bombarded onto them by Teacher Zhou.

“Is there anything wrong with my lecturing, why is everyone suddenly so quiet?’ Teacher Zhou was baffled by the awkward atmosphere.

“Teacher, it really surprised us that you are in the state of an ocean of qi!” A round faced guy blurted out in astonishment.

When Teacher Zhou said that he had no experience in the last two realms, the students felt like they were hit by a thunderbolt. Because they never expected that this hoary little man had surpassed a forged body, this came as a huge surprise to them. Aside from Xu Yi, everyone here was only at the beginning stages of a forged body. For them, they weren’t even confident in reaching the peak state of a forged body, let alone stepping into the realm of an ocean of qi.

Xu Yi was probably the only one who didn’t make any fuss over it. He had previously fought with Shirong, who had also reached an ocean of qi. So he knew quite clearly how powerful it was. However, he treated each word from Teacher Zhou as a gem and sculptured them deep inside his heart.

“Bullshit! How can you consider an ocean of qi to be a big deal?!” Teacher Zhou angrily retorted.

“Even if you’ve reached the final stage – a grateful soul, you are still living in this damn mortal world! Listen, if don’t have the mere courage to obtain the state of an ocean of qi, just get out of my class!” Teacher Zhou continued.

Indeed, the verbally passionate Teacher Zhou had his own miserable story, however, he wasn't interested in sharing this with his students. Yes, he had obtained an ocean of qi, but that was nearly twenty years ago. Now, sadly, he was like a disabled person in Wu Dao, as his Dantian – the basis for cultivating Wu Dao, had been damaged in a fierce battle. Thanks to his solid theoretical knowledge in Wu Dao, as well as his presentation skills, he had finally managed to make a living in the Lecture Room.

Teacher Zhou didn't wish to share his negative emotions, so he kept the bitter remorse to himself.

Xu Yi finally broke the silence and stood, as he asked another question, "My apologies, Teacher Zhou, but I've got another question. During an intense fight, what's the most important factor? Strength or speed, which one will dominate in a fight? And how about battle techniques, are they vital in a fight? In addition, based on what you've just told us, one won't have more than an ox's strength in the peak state of a forged body, yet I've heard stories that some cultivators are able to reach three-oxen strength in the peak state. How do you explain that?"

This question had puzzled Xu Yi ever since he had fought with Elder Feng, who had exerted the Tranquil Fist, which was three-oxen strength. Although Xu Yi had survived this attack, it had been an extremely close call, as his armor had been his saving grace. He still had lingering fears on the fatal strength of that fist.

During Xu Yi's cultivation, all he knew was how to cultivate around the clock, in the hope that something magic would happen to his strength and speed. It never occurred to him that techniques would be so

powerful, that was, until he met Elder Feng. Xu Yi was, indeed, a little bit envious of Elder Feng's mind boggling Tranquil Fist.

"Look at you, diligent, discerning and cautious; you're great material for Wu Dao!" Teacher Zhou glanced at Xu Yi and then enjoyed a sip of his wine.

"Ok, let me answer your question. Firstly, never forget to treat strength and speed as your top priority. You know, in front of absolute strength, any showy technique would be easily overshadowed. In other words, never underestimate the importance of strength and speed."

"Secondly, we occasionally need techniques to overcome our shortcomings in strength or speed. Look, absolute strength is not an easy thing to achieve, when you encounter someone in a higher realm, what would you do? Your strength and speed won't help you out, only techniques can narrow the gap between you and your enemy. Anyway, you're all in the state of a forged body and you'll hardly have any chance to compete with those in a higher realm."

"That's why I consider, to some extent, absolute strength a pseudo-proposition. Only a minority of the talented cultivators will be lucky enough to gain absolute strength. For normal cultivators, like you, I suggest that techniques are an effective way to improve your ability. Or let me put it this way, techniques, strength and speed are an integral part in the cultivation process of Wu Dao. None of them should be singled out as the most important element."



## Chapter Nineteen - Being Recruited

Xu Yi sat quietly, absorbing the knowledge imparted by Teacher Zhou, as if he was a sponge in water.

Teacher Zhou glanced at Xu Yi and smiled, before he continued. "It is fair to say that techniques are a perfect combination of strength and speed. During the thousands of years of history, masters in Wu Dao have developed exquisite techniques, that would enhance or even surpass the power of strength and speed."

"What you just mentioned is theoretically true. The strength of one ox is approximately the power of a cultivator at the peak state. In a real fight, however, if you can properly use techniques, then it isn't impossible to reach three-oxen strength at the same peak state. Perhaps this is a little bit too difficult for you to comprehend. Let me give you an example. Have you ever seen the cargo ships, that pass by our village, in the river? No matter how heavy the goods they carry are, it takes them little effort to load them on or off. Do you know why? It is due to the pulleys, which are installed along the mast. With these pulleys, it's possible to lift goods that far outweigh its own weight. In this case, techniques in Wu Dao are analogous to these pulleys, they both increase efficiency. In conclusion, strength is the basis while techniques are the tools. A solid basis with advanced tools is the perfect combination!"

A peal of applause burst out following Teacher Zhou's intelligent remarks.

Xu Yi felt enlightened, as if beholding the sun blazing through the

clouded sky. Teacher Zhou must've been a master in Wu Dao, or else he wouldn't be able to spontaneously deliver such a comprehensive speech.

When Xu Yi was about to raise another question, someone else in the classroom stood up. It had become obvious that Teacher Zhou was a kind of pundit in the realm of Wu Dao, hence they all desired to seize this golden opportunity to clear up their doubts regarding Wu Dao.

One after another raised their hands, as if there was a race going on in the classroom. Where originally it seemed like Xu Yi would be able to ask freely, now he had to fight with his classmates to be able to raise his own questions. Within one quarter of an hour, Teacher Zhou had answered all the questions from the other students. Eventually, Teacher Zhou snatched the wine kettle and left the classroom, without saying a word.

Looking at the back of Teacher Zhou, Xu Yi was actually a little bit disappointed, as he was still left with a variety of urgent unanswered questions. He remained in the classroom and started meditating, as a solemn expression covered his face.

Soon, dusk was about to arrive, the leaves of the bamboo trees outside the window were rustling in the wind. Xu Yi suddenly turned around, as he felt a whiff of fresh air coming through the window; he realised that all his classmates had already left.

Xu Yi stood up and was about to leave as well, when someone knocked on the classroom door. The man in plain clothing, who had tested Xu Yi before he was allowed to enter the Lecture Room, entered and smiled at Xu Yi, "Hey brother, I was waiting for you out in the hall, but the other students said that you were still in the classroom."

"What's up?" Xu Yi asked, as he was rather curious.

"Don't worry. I've got some good news for you. Oh, by the way, where are you from, I mean, what is your hometown?" The man in plain clothing kept smiling, as if Xu Yi was his friend.

"I can't wait to hear the good news, please just tell me." Xu Yi intentionally avoided the hometown question. Even though he looked calm on the outside, he was actually terrified of being recognised.

If Xu Yi revealed his name and hometown, it was like committing suicide, as he thought that the Zhou Family would be ceaselessly searching for him. The Zhou Family was so influential that it'd be easy for them to find Xu Yi, once someone provided them any clues about Xu Yi's whereabouts.

"Hey, you don't have to worry. I generally know what happened to you. Elder Mu rescued you three days ago, and you've since stayed with his family." The man in plain clothing said kindly.

"General Gu, you can read my mind." Xu Yi replied with pretended happiness, as he was preparing for the worst.

"Ok, I really don't have much time or interest in knowing your personal details, I am here to invite you to join the Plain Clothing Unit in Hibiscus Town." General Gu replied.

“Plain Clothing Unit? Sorry, I don’t understand you.” Xu Yi said, as he was rather confused.

General Gu stared at Xu Yi for a couple of seconds. He then remembered that Xu Yi was not a local and that he was most likely not familiar with this town quite yet. So he tried to explain: “The Plain Clothing Unit is a group of people who are responsible for safeguarding our town. You know, in our country, apart from the national forces, there are various local guards. Among them, they’re categorised into five ranks, which are represented by the clothing they wear – gold, purple, black, white and green. The Gold Clothing Unit works for the Empire; Purple Clothing Unit works for vassal states; Black Clothing Unit works for states and prefectures; White Clothing Unit works for provincial governments.”

“Hibiscus Town is affiliated to the White Horse County, which is a humble place. That’s why we wear plain clothing, as we belong to none of the afore mentioned rankings. Actually, I’m the leader of our Hibiscus town’s Unit. Today, I was rather impressed by your abilities in the test and I know you’re someone carrying great potential. We sincerely hope that you’d be willing to join us!”

Xu Yi slightly relaxed, as he understood that this man had nothing to do with the Zhou Family. If he joined their group, they’d most likely not further investigate his background. Moreover, since the Unit was an official organisation, they’d keep every employee’s personal file. If Xu Yi submitted a false name, they would keep it as his official name. This was an expedient way to hide himself from the Zhou Family.

Thinking it over for a little bit, Xu Yi decided that it was in his best interest to take this man up on his offer, so he replied with a positive yes. “I’d be honored to become a part of your Unit!”

General Gu burst out in laughter. He was overjoyed, as his Unit had been undermanned for a long time. Now, a new member with great abilities and potential would join and fill the gap.

“Brother, I swear that you won’t regret your decision. Let me introduce myself, I am Gu Jianming.” He introduced himself as he patted Xu Yi on the back, expressing his excitement.

Originally, General Gu considered Xu Yi to be a man with some strength, as he had passed the test. However, at that time, he didn’t have any plans on dragging him into his Unit. That was, until the end of class, when everyone was discussing Xu Yi and the questions he had posed. General Gu quickly learned from the other students what questions Xu Yi had raised in class. As he heard what these questions were, he realised that Xu Yi was someone with a bright future in Wu Dao, as no average Joe [1] would ask such questions.

Currently, Xu Yi had only taken a single step in Wu Dao, which was the perfect time to recruit him as a member of their Unit. When Xu Yi would grow stronger, General Gu would no longer be able to interest this talent in joining his Unit.

Actually, General Gu had investigated Xu Yi before throwing this olive branch at Xu Yi. As a local official, it was rather easy for him to pry into an outsider. After finding out that Xu Yi was saved by Elder Mu, he was almost certain that Xu Yi must have been through a fierce revengeful fight. This, however, wasn’t news worthy, as revenge fights were carried out left and right in this mortal world.

After all, though General Gu had no intention to delve into Xu Yi's previous life, he did notice Xu Yi's unwillingness to reveal his identity. This was why he told Xu Yi not to worry about any identity problems. Only by seizing this weakness, had he successfully persuaded Xu Yi into joining his Unit.

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[1]: an average Joe here, means someone who'll never amount to anything in his/her cultivation in Wu Dao.

## Chapter Twenty – A Question About The Soul

“I’m Yi Xu, I believe we’ll get along like a house on fire.” Xu Yi gave General Gu a fabricated name, since he didn’t wish to leave any clues for the Zhou Family to trace him.

“Yes, I think so too. I’ve already prepared a set of clothing and the other necessary equipment, for when you officially join us. Hey, why don’t you go to the Gladiolus Wine Restaurant and buy a kettle of green bamboo leaf liquor?” General Gu laughed and invited Xu Yi.

“I beg your pardon?” Xu Yi was slightly confused as to why he should buy wine. After all, he didn’t drink alcohol.

“Ok, let me get to the point. You’re a man with an unpredictable potential in Wu Dao, someone who deserves an experienced teacher to provide effective guidance. Those privileged young men in rich families have personal tutors and whenever they encounter a question, they can just seek their tutor and ask. While your only chance to receive guidance is in the Lecture Room, where both time and questioning opportunities are limited. It’s like this, because there are tens of other students that you have to share this benefit with. So if you wish to receive more guidance, then you must create the opportunities by yourself. I understand Teacher Zhou quite well, since he has been in our little town for nearly twenty years. Oh, and don’t forget, he’s an alcoholic. Maybe you can “bribe” him with a kettle of wine. Actually, I’m almost certain that he’s currently drinking in the pavilion of the Dragon Beard River.” General Gu analyzed Xu Yi’s current situation and provided him with some golden advice.

“How considerate of you!” Xu Yi exclaimed, as he suddenly ran past

General Gu.

The Dragon Beard River was a branch of the Evil Dragon River, which was named after its location. In the chilly yet limpid water, ripples emerged from time to time because of the breeze. The scenery, on both sides of the river, was breath-taking, as the trees and flowers were blossoming in bold colors. The most spectacular part was, that this scenery, together with the blue sky, was reflected on the river like a gigantic painting. It was quite obvious why Teacher Zhou would choose this spot to have a drink at.

Xu Yi carried two big kettles of wine, while he was overwhelmed by the scenery as he walked along the bumpy road.

"Here!"

As Xu Yi was busy finding where the pavilion was, a hoarse sound caught his attention. Suddenly, he noticed that Teacher Zhou was only several meters away, sitting on a rock and waving at him.

To Xu Yi's astonishment, Teacher Zhou was like a hungry lion, swooping down on him. Hardly had Xu Yi arrived at the rock, or Teacher Zhou had already snatched the two kettles and unplugged the lid of one of them.

"Hmmm, I've longed for this liquor for a long time. Now, it's like a dream come true. You know, the fragrance of this wine crept into my nose, before I could even identify who was carrying the wine. It's rather embarrassing for me to tell you, that I can't afford to buy this green bamboo leaf liquor with the salary I get from teaching. Anyway, the taste of this wine is heavenly!" Teacher Zhou imbibed the wine greedily as he



spoke to Xu Yi, leaving some drops of wine lingering on his beard.

Looking at Teacher Zhou quaffing like an ox, Xu Yi decided not to disturb him. He silently listened to the old man talk, as he stood squarely.

Soon, one kettle had been completely emptied. Only now did Teacher Zhou realise, that there was a young man by his side, who was patiently waiting.

"You're a smart kid, I know exactly why you're doing this. Someone must've told you something about me. Anyway, two kettles, two questions!" Teacher Zhou was a straightforward man and he understood that it was most likely that Xu Yi was here to find the answers to some questions.

"I learned from your class, that once you've reached the final state – a grateful soul, as long as your soul was devout throughout your cultivation, you'd receive energy from the heavens. My question is, do we truly have souls in our body and if we do, then when will the soul reveal itself? What kind of role does the soul play in the cultivation of Wu Dao?" Xu Yi felt so relieved by letting out these long-buried questions.

Xu Yi possessed many uncommon abilities, such as ghost-seeing eyes, hypersensitivity to any changes, abilities to overcome fatigue, *etc.* For instance, if he walked in a dangerous forest with many wild beasts, he'd notice from far away if a beast was trying to sneak up on him. However, perhaps the most unreasonable part was, that he could stay awake for many days and nights while cultivating. Even though he might've encountered some physical limits, such as some pain on his body, after several hours of sleep, his body would be recovered and become energetic once again.

It were these gifted talents or abilities that had helped him become the current Xu Yi. However, Xu Yi was rather confused, as he couldn't figure out "why". Maybe the genes in his body were mutated in some way, which would bring him unimaginable power. Or was it possible that his transferred soul had somehow triggered all these extra abilities?

All these were just clueless guesses, since Xu Yi had never met someone to decode this mystery. He was actually slightly suffering from not knowing the reason behind these abilities.

"What a weird question, why do you want to know this?" Teacher Zhou asked Xu Yi, with a disturbed faraway look. Right now, he had already finished more than a full kettle of wine and was no longer sober. He seemed especially frustrated by Xu Yi's unexpected question, because it wasn't an easy one.

"I've got a bee in my bonnet about it! Please, Teacher Zhou, enlighten me, or else it'll drive me crazy." Xu Yi responded.

"Well, fine, since I've already accepted your wine, there's no reason for me to dodge your questions. Oh, you have raised three questions, you know. But don't worry, I won't haggle over every ounce."

"Now for the first question – Do we have souls? The answer is definitely yes. Without souls, what are we? Mere walking dead!"

"The second question, when will the soul reveal itself? I guess, what you mean is, when will the soul be independent from the body, am I right? There are two ways to successfully free your soul. Firstly, once the body is

dead, the soul will be released; Secondly, once you break away from your body, by cultivating your soul to an extremely high level. Many sacred beings have gone through this process.”

“When people are dead, the soul isn’t visible. I’ve heard that only those with yin (the opposite of yang) eyes can see the souls of high-ranking Wu Dao masters. Is that true?” Xu Yi interrupted. He felt that Teacher Zhou's answer was too general, what he wanted was a more detailed explanation.

Since Xu Yi had seen the ghost of Liao Chen, he was confident that he could see souls coming out from other dead bodies. However, he had failed to discover any souls after he had killed Elder Feng, Junior Zhou and the others of the Zhou Family.

“Hey, man, two kettles, two questions! Don’t break the rules!” Teacher Zhou was angry with his goat-like whiskers slightly shivering. He was a rather shrewd old man.

“One more kettle of wine, ok?” To some extent, Xu Yi was rather rich with the golden discs he had collected from Junior Zhou’s family. He didn’t bat an eye when he bought these luxurious wines.

“Deal!” Teacher Zhou smiled with wrinkles crawling all over his bony cheek.

“If I had half of your diligence, I wouldn’t have lost that battle... ok, never mind. Let’s get back to the question. Souls are all spiritual beings; they can’t be seen through the naked eye. For those yin eyes, they’ll see some souls, but not all of them.”

“In this mortal world, the soul of anyone below the state of an ocean of qi is too weak to take shape. Their souls will probably go with the wind instead of revealing itself. For those that have reached the realm of an ocean of qi, their souls are stronger. It is likely that they’ll have independent souls. It’s worth mentioning that the ghost beings of those cultivators, who cultivate the secret method of the so called ‘Warm Nourishment of the Divine Soul’, will last in our mortal world even after death.”

## Chapter 21 – A Powerful Soul

“Your inspiring words keep enlightening me!” Xu Yi expressed his gratitude towards Teacher Zhou. He now understood that an ocean of qi was the threshold for the soul. A forged body would physically enhance the defensive ability, but that was far from enough for Xu Yi. He was determined to surpass this first stage and step into the next realm – an ocean of qi, so that his soul would endure.

“I was paid to do so... Oh right, you better don’t forget that you owe me another kettle... no, two kettles of wine!” The only thing Teacher Zhou cared about was the wine.

“Of course, you have my word. Please, go on!” Xu Yi urged his teacher.

“Alright, the last question – What role does the soul play in cultivating Wu Dao? Hmmm, honestly, I’m not able to provide you with an accurate answer. I’ve never heard of any special methods in forging souls. Probably, only those ultimate experts, who have already stepped into the realm of a grateful soul, can help you dispel these doubts.” Teacher Zhou continued.

“Ok, look at your greedy eyes, thirsty for knowledge, I’ll analyze this question from my own experiences. However, like I mentioned, I’m far from able to give you a definite answer and you should only use my answer as a point of reference. If you’re endowed with a powerful soul, then you’ll probably feel less fatigued in the process of cultivation. You know, all suffering, including fatigue, comes ultimately from our mind. If you have a powerful soul it’ll help you ease the body and the mind. Oh, plus, they also have a higher comprehension, making new knowledge

easier understood. Compared with cultivators with weak souls, they can yield twice the results with half the efforts. Yet, this is only my personal opinion on this question. You'd better experience it by yourself, while you climb to the final stage – a grateful soul.” Teacher Zhou said in a relaxed tone.

This had corroborated with Xu Yi's prediction, that he was blessed with a special soul. Suddenly, he saw a silver lining in his seemingly arduous revenge plan.

“Thank you! I'll see you later.” Xu Yi turned around and walked away from the river, after he thanked Teacher Zhou once more.

“Hey, kid, don't forget about the wine! Please send it to the Iron Cat Alley, Guanan.....” Teacher Zhou shouted in a pitch voice several times louder than his normal speaking tone.

.....

Xu Yi hurried to the most famous restaurant in Hibiscus town and bought several boxes of take-out, before rushing back to the Mu Family.

Opening the uneven door, Xu Yi found Autumn was sitting in the yard.

A broken chair was used as a dinner table, and Autumn was merrily eating the steamed corn-bread and salted fish. These were actually only cold leftovers.

“Where have you been? You are supposed to stay at home. I count on

you to cook dinner for me. Lazy uncle, look, I have left you half a fish.” Autumn pouted.

Since Elder Mu was always busy with his fishing business, these days, Xu Yi had taken the responsibility of taking care of Autumn. That was why he had bought the take-out food just now.

“You little naughty girl, you didn’t even wait for me for dinner. I’m so sad. Look, I have my own dinner, and I won’t share it with you.” Xu Yi jokingly told Autumn.

Xu Yi sat down on a nearby rock and respectively opened the hampers. He intentionally arrayed the dishes in a long line to grab Autumn’s attention.

Osmanthus stewed duck, special flavored sausage, chicken cooked with scallion oil, secret roasted suckling pig, fried carps with soy sauce...

The distinctive colors and fragrances made the dishes especially inviting. Under the subsiding sunlight, there even seemed to be some graceful luster glittering on the dishes.

Autumn was staring at the dishes, while drool was quickly dripping out of her mouth. Before she even realised it, she had already dropped the iron-bread she had been holding in her hands.

Looking at the drooling Autumn, Xu Yi lifted the chopsticks and picked some of the duck and put it into his mouth. He moved his jaws up and down, biting on the duck, making a distinctive chewing sound.

"Ah!" Autumn cried out and jumped on Xu Yi's lap.

"It's not fair, I hate you! Let me eat this delicious food!" Autumn acted like a spoiled child. She continued complaining and eventually grabbed the greasy chicken. Soon, she had wolfed down half of the chicken. At this moment she wished that she had two more stomachs, so that she could properly enjoy this dinner. Never in her lifetime had she eaten such delicate dishes, since all she knew was coarse buns, bread or some salted fish.

"Enough, or you will eat yourself to death!" Xu Yi eventually stopped Autumn.

Autumn was almost fish-bellied. She could hardly move herself and sank down on the chair. She patted on her belly, in the hope that the food in her stomach would quickly be digested.

Since Autumn had enjoyed the meal, Xu Yi devoured the rest of the dishes within several minutes. At his current stage, he took in nourishments to maintain his strength.

The carp, the suckling pig and the remains of the chicken were all eaten by Xu Yi, almost all at once. This beast-like appetite slightly petrified Autumn.

"Oh, no!" Autumn jumped off the chair, very much like the response of a cat whose tail got stepped on. She pointed at the empty dishes and looked at Xu Yi with an angry, yet adorable expression.



"Ah, I've finished it all. You little glutton. Aren't you jealous of my big belly, haha..." Xu Yi roared with laughter. He felt a lot more spirited towards life, ever since he had met Autumn and Elder Mu. It astonished him, as he had started to enjoy laughter since arriving here, where before he would never laugh.

...

After dinner, Xu Yi went directly to the Department of the Guardsman, as he had an appointment there with General Gu.

Several minutes later, Xu Yi arrived at the department, where an arch-shaped gate was erected as entrance. He went through this stone gate and entered into a spacious yard. It looked similar to an arena for cultivation.

A group of strong and half-naked young men was practicing there. Actually, it seemed like they were doing body building exercises. They were standing on the iron-made fitness equipments, stretching their arms and legs until sweat was all over their bronze-colored body.

The sour smell of sweat was floating in the air. Honestly, it was a little bit disgusting. But the cultivators found a certain kind of joy in this, as it was the proof of their hard work.

"Who are you looking for? If you need to file a lawsuit, just beat that stupid drum at the doorway (an official ritual) and submit your written

complaint. Do you understand?" One of the men asked Xu Yi rather unkindly.

However, when Xu Yi was about to reply, General Gu came out with a big smile on his face.

"I've been waiting for you all day long. Finally, you're here!" General Gu was walking out from the main hall, while holding a pile of official documents in his left hand.

"I apologize for arriving at such a late hour. This, however, was due to my job back at the Mu Family... You know, the nanny job." Xu Yi replied with a rare sense of humor.

Looking around, Xu Yi began to visualize what it would be like to work at this place.

## Chapter 22 – Laws and Decrees

“Come here guys, Let me introduce our newest member!” General Gu clapped his hands as a signal to gather everyone around.

“This is Yi Xu, our new guardsman.” After introducing Xu Yi, General Gu also introduced the rest of the members to Xu Yi one by one.

It surprised Xu Yi when he realised that, including himself, there were merely six others in total. No wonder General Gu said that they were severely undermanned.

Xu Yi politely bowed to every colleague. His complaisance left the other members with a good impression.

Soon, General Gu dismissed the group and led Xu Yi to the main hall, to proceed the official procedures – registering, taking his uniform and receiving his Yao Pai [1]...

General Gu specified to Xu Yi that the monthly salary would reach fifty taels of silver, as well as other welfares. Later, he took out a huge book with the title ‘Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue’. The book fell on the desk with a loud thud. “If you have any spare time, just read through this book. It’ll greatly benefit you, trust me.” General Gu advised Xu Yi, before he left.

...

The next day, after Xu Yi had finished his daily chores, he made his way back to his new job.

Suddenly, Xu Yi had become a civil servant in this town. He never imaged this to happen, after he had arrived here as a kind of refugee. However, Since he was in the government system now, he didn't need to worry about his identity anymore. Xu Yi believed that even the lowest ranking guards had some authority. He was more than happy to study the thick 'Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue', because that was the theoretical guidance for his new job.

He chose a place next to a window and started reading. As he was reading, he got slightly distracted by the verdant plants outside the window, which were full of life force. The luxuriously green color really pleased Xu Yi, he would occasionally raise his head to look at this scenery, as he was reading.

Xu Yi's level-headed and forward-looking soul was a blessing for him. He learned to enjoy the loneliness and to accept this seemingly ridiculous life. Moreover, his powerful soul also bestowed him with extra abilities – he could be highly-focused on something and remember everything. Now, for example, as he was reading the 'Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue', it would probably take him only four hours to finish this gigantic book. For all the 108,650 articles of laws and decrees in this book, Xu Yi was able to recite, not all, but most of them.

...

The sunlight outside was already fading away and the setting sun appeared on the peak of the Hui Yin Mountain. Xu Yi realised that it was already time for him to make some dinner for Autumn. Without any delay,

he grabbed all of his belongings and headed towards a restaurant.

Half an hour later, Xu Yi bought several boxes of take-out. On one hand, Xu Yi really didn't have much time to cook by himself and for energetic boys like him, cooking was extremely boring, he'd rather spend his time practicing Wu Dao. On the other hand, the cost of the take-out food was as low as two taels of silver. It was totally affordable for him, as he still reserved some precious golden discs that were stolen from Junior Zhou's family.

As per the official exchange rate, one golden coin could be converted into 200 taels of silver. Plus, golden coins were only regarded as a common currency among the upper-class. If it appeared in the public and someone reported this to the government, the owner would be forced to change it to silver coins. To use gold coins in public was considered as something, that wasn't worthy of the upper-class.

Indeed, in the underground market, one golden coin could be valued as high as 500 taels of silver. Sometimes, the price could be even higher than that. The official exchange rate of 200 taels of silver per golden coin was just a mandated price, which let the government have a finger in the pie itself.

Now, that the personal property of Xu Yi accumulated to an enormous amount – the two golden discs were worth thousands of golden coins, plus the ten golden coins he had stolen from Elder Feng. He could easily afford to live a luxurious life. And he wouldn't be cheap towards the Mu Family either. He honestly wished to improve their livelihood.

.....

On his way back to the Mu Family, when Xu Yi walked along the Dragon Beard River, he stopped for a while to peacefully enjoy the setting of the sun. The numerous sailing boats from afar looked like small dots on the surface, the dots grew larger and larger , as the boats returned to shore. He knew that he was rarely so emotional since his dog's death, but now, he was really touched by nature's beauty. Actually, since Xu Yi had met Elder Mu and Autumn, his heart seemed to have been melted by their kindness.

It was about dinner time, everyone in this town seemed to be enjoying some free time after a long and hard day of work. The wine restaurants and tea houses were swarmed with people. Street pedlars occupied every usable space, seizing the business opportunity, that was brought by the influx of a large number of people.

The bargaining noises, the exotic baubles displayed on the stall, all of these were new to Xu Yi. At this time of day, the whole marketplace was alive. Xu Yi looked around and felt as if his life became as vivid as the marketplace.

Looking into the distance, Xu Yi believed that Elder Mu was in one of the homeward sailing boats. So he decided to pick him up before going home.

After walking for several steps, Xu Yi halted and narrowed his eyes, trying to see clearly what was happening in the distance.

...

" Ah, Elder Mu, you have caught such a big carp. What a lucky day for you!"

"Come on, guys. Look what Elder Mu got today. I guess this big carp will weigh at least one hundred kilograms."

"I'm so envious of you, Elder Mu. For the price of such a big carp, it is worth several months' earnings."

"Every dog has its day! When luck knocked on your door, maybe the big carp just jumped into your net. Haha."

"Look at those small fish in my net, it is worthless compared with Elder Mu's."

With great effort, Elder Mu was dragging the carp on shore; Sweat had long soaked his clothing.

Soon, all the nearby fishermen had gathered around Elder Mu, amazed by the mere size of the carp.

Carps were the traditional speciality of the Evil Dragon River, the meat was tender and greasy. Quite a number of high-ranking celebrities or government officials were fond of the carp soup. They were willing to pay a high price to enjoy this classic cuisine.

The price of the carp was best known by its demand. Usually, the large carps lived in the deeper areas of the river; it was extremely difficult to capture them. Even for experienced fishermen, capturing a big carp was

just a matter of luck. As for the carp captured by Elder Mu, a hundred taels of silver might even be a conservative estimate. This was an extraordinary amount of money for a normal fisherman.

All of a sudden, the crowd was separated, as if someone terrifying was approaching.

“Get the hell out of my way! Ah, Good news travels fast. A big carp? Let me have a look!” A man in black clothing, who was escorted by several strong bodyguards, dashed through the crowd.

With a shrieking sound of ripping, the man in black clothing tore the net open. He then immediately grabbed the carp by its head.

“Hmmm, what a delicious carp. I was just wondering what to offer to my distinguished guests for dinner. Ah, what a coincidence. This must be a gift bestowed by the heavens.” The man in black clothing scrutinized the carp, while shamelessly saying these words, as if the carp was already his own property.

“Your Excellency, you’re so lucky to get this carp!” A middle-aged man squeezed to the front and smiled at the man in black clothing. Turning around, his friendly smile quickly disappeared, as he harshly yelled at Elder Mu: “Hey, old man. What are you waiting for?! Hurry up and bring that carp to our warehouse.”

“Zhou Yuya, wait, wait...” Elder Mu replied and called some familiar fishermen to help him carry the carp with him.



The middle-aged man was named Zhou Yuya, the boss of the fishing industry here, who had monopolized the whole fishing market in this small town. Every catch was supposed to be sold to him, usually for a rather low price. Although Yuya had reaped most of the profits, it was still convenient for the fishermen to earn some silver coins by selling it to him. After all, they didn't have a better way to sell their fish.

Elder Mu was an honest man, so he silently agreed to the deal, despite the fact that this rare carp would hit a higher price on the street market.

When Elder Mu, together with two strong fishermen were about to grab the carp, the man in black clothing suddenly moved the carp from its original spot. Obviously, by doing so, he intended to make a fool out of these fishermen.

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[1] Yao Pai: a plate used as a token of identity, which will be attached to the waist.

## Chapter 23 – An Abrupt Change Of The Situation

“There’s no need to hurry, Yuya... Actually, don’t bother to buy it for me. I’ll handle this one myself.” The man in black clothing said, before he asked his bodyguards to wrap the carp into a bag.

“I’m honored to give you this carp as a gift.” Yuya flattered.

The man in black clothing tapped on Yuya’s shoulder and then threw some silver on the ground, a few bits and pieces.

“Hey, old man, this is the payment for that carp, go and pick it up!” He arrogantly barked at Elder Mu.

All the fishermen, including Elder Mu himself, were shocked as well as irritated by this brazen behavior. Counting the silver bits on the ground, it was no more than two taels of silver in total. Normally, even Yuya would pay him a hundred taels of silver. It was a transparent and accepted price here.

“This is not fair. How can you buy this carp for only two taels of silver?” One of the fishermen with a long face replied angrily.

After the angry voice of this man sounded out, all the other fishermen burst into an uproar. They were all in the same boat, since they had all long been exploited by those tyrannical and cold-blooded evildoers. At the beginning, they were really happy for Elder Mu’s catch of the day. They even congratulated Elder Mu for capturing such a precious carp. However, they never thought that all the joyfulness would turn out to be a

tragedy.

"Ah ha! Listen, if you dare to rebel, I won't take any of your fish today!" Yuya yelled at the upset fishermen, as he saw that the man in black clothing's expression was quickly turning gloomy. After all, this port was within the scope of his jurisdiction.

Immediately, the crowd turned silent, as they didn't want to lose their chance to earn some meager money from Yuya. They were the bread-earners of their poor families. They had to financially support their wife and children!

- Boom! –

Without any warning, the long-faced fisherman was hit by the man in black clothing. He was thrown away and landed heavily against a large flagstone, leaving a large pool of blood.

"I ask you one more time. Is two taels of silver enough for the carp?!" The man in black clothing asked, as his evil eyes observed the crowd. He punished the long-faced man in an attempt to frighten the others. As he expected, the other fishermen quickly retreated several steps, except for Elder Mu.

Elder Mu straightened his back and raised his head, in a pose that didn't dilute his self-esteem. He squarely stared back at the man in black clothing.

"If you're really interested in my carp, then I'll give it to you for free.

However, what right do you have to beat my fellow fishermen up?!" Elder Mu shouted at the man in black clothing.

"How dare you speak to our Excellency this way? For fishermen like you, do you think you deserve an explanation after being beaten? How funny!" Yuya stepped forward and slapped Elder Mu in the face.

Elder Mu stood there calmly, his swarthy face was as tough as a rock and the wrinkles on his face seemed to be sculptured on there. Suddenly, he threw out a short fork from his waist, directly throwing it at Yuya.

The flying fork went through Yuya's loose robe, completely missing Yuya, it was, however, a close call. Eventually, the fork had flown all the way towards the carp and unexpectedly even pierced into its head.

Everyone was stunned by the abrupt change of the situation.

It was true that the meat of the carp was tasty, but only when it was cooked immediately after it was killed. Now, the carp was already stabbed to death by Elder Mu, it was now almost impossible to create a delicious cuisine out of it.

"F\*\*k you, old bastard!" Yuya was so infuriated that some of the hairs on his head even erected in a funny way.

"That's my fish! I have the right to kill it or cook it. It is none of your business!" With an awe-inspiring expression, Elder Mu retorted in an unintimidated voice.

"Oh look, a street hero! Hey, guys, come look! Let's see how strong our little 'hero' is." The man in black clothing said, as he laughed at Elder Mu's confidence.

Immediately, several of his bodyguards encircled Elder Mu. However, they didn't attack straight away; instead, they observed Elder Mu's response. Indeed, they were a little bit shocked by the fork-throwing skill of this old man, so they were currently rather apprehensive.

Actually, Elder Mu was simply an old fisherman with a stout build. If measured by the standards of Wu Dao, he wouldn't even qualify for the state of a forged body.

After a short while, the bodyguards were convinced that Elder Mu posed no threat. They dove on Elder Mu and started throwing punches. Elder Mu immediately passively curled up and hid his head behind his crossed arms, trying to evade any real damage.

"That's enough, don't beat him to death. Give him a chance to beg me for mercy." The man in black clothing waved his hand as a stop sign.

Elder Mu lied on the ground, unable to stand up. His clothing was smeared with blood and on the ground a small pool of blood could even be seen. At the same time, he was gasping for air, with his chest swelling and quivering in a rhythmic fluctuation.

The obstinacy of Elder Mu drew the attention of the man in black clothing. He said with an evil smile: "Old man, if you can kowtow three times to me, I'll probably let you go. Otherwise, I'll definitely throw your body into the Dragon Beard River!"

Without any verbal response, Elder Mu straightened his neck, showing no signs of submissiveness.

"Old bastard, you sure are tough. Alright, guards tie this old man to a rock and then throw him into the river!" The man in black clothing became tired of Elder Mu's thick skin.

"Your Excellency, please think twice. Doing this in front of so many people, will surely hurt your reputation!" Yuya reminded the man in black clothing in a low voice.

Although Hibiscus Town was a small place that was not worth mentioning, it was still within the territory of Empire Yue. The laws and decrees of Empire Yue were not a joke, it was formally stipulated in the laws that murder and bullying wasn't allowed.

The civilians here had long been suppressed by local powers. But even so, none of the prominent figures would dare to kill people in public, in other words, they would do it secretly rather than in broad daylight, making sure their reputation would remain intact.

"What's the big deal about killing in public? Anyone who stands in my way, I'll kill him. So what if it's in broad daylight?!" The man in black clothing sneered.

"Come on! Throw him into the river! Don't make me say it twice." He barked like a mad dog.

"Hurry up! Have you ever heard of White Horse Palace, a subdivision of the renowned Black Dragon Palace? He is the young lord of this palace. Whoever dares to disobey our young lord is truly foolish." Yuya exposed the true identity of the man in black clothing, in an attempt to threaten any reckless fishermen from fighting for Elder Mu.

It was obvious that Yuya was a shrewd businessman and that all he cared about were his own profits. If the fishermen rebelled, the young lord in black clothing might break their arms and legs, which would affect Yuya's business. He had to rely on these fishermen to maximize his profits.

As Yuya anticipated, the mere mentioning of the Black Dragon Palace was enough to mute the crowd. The fishermen had no choice but to swallow all the anger and complain in their head.

"The Black Dragon Palace is sacred, so don't speak it out in front of these mediocre people." The man in black clothing glanced arrogantly at the crowd, concealing his satisfaction of seeing the petrified crowd.

At this very moment, a young girl with a backpack was rushing towards Elder Mu.

"Granpa, Granpa, What..What happened to you...hum..hum..."

The girl shook the body of Elder Mu over and over again, while tears were rolling down her cute little cheeks.

## Chapter 24 – Bronze Hammers

Doubtlessly, the little girl was Autumn.

Everyday, after school, Autumn would run to the port and meet with her grandpa. Usually, she'd receive some pocket money from him to buy some candy. Afterwards, the bells attached to her bracelet would ring rhythmically, as they'd walk back home together. This was probably the most cheerful moment of her day.

Now, this supposed simple happiness was destroyed by violence and cruelty. What a tragedy in this mortal world.

"Ah, a little girl!" The man in black clothing said, as he quickly grabbed Autumn by her collar.

"Old man, let us see how unyielding you really are." He threw Autumn high up in the air.

"Autumn, watch out!" Elder Mu exclaimed helplessly.

Suddenly, at the moment when Autumn was about to hit the ground, the man in black clothing swiftly caught her. Actually, he didn't intend to actually kill this little girl, instead, he was simply using her as bait, in an attempt to make Elder Mu surrender.

"Listen, old bastard. If you don't kowtow to me, I'm not sure I will catch her next time." He pressured Elder Mu to capitulate.



Elder Mu barely managed to steadily stand up.

"No, Grandpa, no...I hate these guys..." Autumn screamed.

"Shut up, Autumn. Grandpa is ok!" Elder Mu was afraid if Autumn said something that offended the man in black clothing, it would be disastrous for the both of them.

"Don't waste my time! Are you Kowtowing or not?" The man in black clothing urged viciously. In order to make Elder Mu kowtow to him, he even threw Autumn up in the air for a second time.

Finally, Elder Mu wiggly kneeled down, in the hope to save the life of his beloved granddaughter.

The man in black clothing laughed out sardonically, he was a pervert who could only find happiness in others' sufferings.

As he was rejoicing his power, he had forgotten about the falling Autumn. However, at this moment a man with an unshaven beard appeared in front of him, catching Autumn in his arms. This man was no other than Xu Yi!

Xu Yi then walked towards Elder Mu, lifted him up and brought out a handkerchief to wipe the blood stains off his face.

"It's my fault. Elder Mu, I should have come earlier." Xu Yi blamed

himself for being late.

Elder Mu was suffering from a fit of intense coughing, he wished to say something to Xu Yi, but the coughing stopped him. Xu Yi immediately patted the back of Elder Mu, in the hope to get the air to flow smoothly in his lungs again.

Autumn put her arm around Xu Yi's neck, crying: "Uncle Xu, please take us out of here!"

...

Xu Yi was a man with hyper-sensitivity. Several minutes ago, Xu Yi was on the way to the port, when he heard the bitter sobbing of Autumn, he had immediately rushed towards the scene. As he was still several hundreds of meters away, he could already sense what was happening at the port.

He furiously sprinted towards the port, breaking all the slates he put his feet on along the way. Autumn and Elder Mu meant a lot to him, he wouldn't let them be bullied. But now, looking at the weak Elder Mu, and the shivering Autumn, a surge of indignation filled his heart.

All these days, he had been in the Mu Family, enjoying a sweet relationship that he had never experienced before. If not for Elder Mu, he might have been a mere dead body floating in the river. He knew nothing could ever suffice to repay Elder Mu's kindness.

Xu Yi felt so safe and peaceful in the Mu Family. He had sympathy for

their poor conditions, but also gratitude and appreciation for their pure kindness. It struck Xu Yi that he had the same feeling when his dog had died.

"Silly girl, don't worry. I can handle these villains." Xu Yi consoled Autumn. Later, he turned around and stared at the man in black clothing. He slowly took out his Yao Pai, which was a token of his government identity.

"I am the new guard in the Plain Clothing Unit. Who can tell me what happened here?" Xu Yi proudly raised the Yao Pai for everyone to see it clearly.

"Guard? Go home! Don't make fun of yourself!" Yuya jumped out and scornfully yelled at Xu Yi.

Indeed, in the beginning, everyone was a little bit frightened because of Xu Yi's speed. However, now that they heard that this guy was just a guard, they felt relaxed and even started to look down on him. Because they all knew that the guards in Hibiscus Town were pure trash. Plus, Yuya was an influential man who had great leverage on the livelihood of the fishermen, he would certainly not be threatened by a low-ranking guard.

"You are the initiator, right? Then you tell me what has happened. You're a man, right? At least you should have the courage to admit to what you've done!" Xu Yi didn't pay much attention to Yuya, on the contrary, he turned to the man in black clothing.

"Hahaha...I haven't met anyone as interesting as you for a long time. Alright, let me tell you what has happened." The man in black clothing

narrated briefly on what had happened just now, in an attempt to insult Xu Yi.

"As I just said, I've committed so many evils, come and get me, guard!" The man in black clothing burst out in laughter, as if this was something extremely hilarious.

He walked in front of Xu Yi and urged him: "Come on, skinny guard. You want to catch me? I'm right here."

"Hahaha..." All his bodyguards laughed out loudly. Because they were sure the guards in this town were all trash.

"Hey, young man. Just go home and don't get yourself in trouble..." Yuya grinned from ear to ear, though he tried hard to hold his manner.

Xu Yi couldn't stand still anymore, he jumped off the ground and lifted Yuya upside down in the air by gripping his right arm. Instantly, Yuya's face turned red, then purple...

Everyone was astounded by the unexpected attack. Soon, several strong half-naked men, who were employed as hatchet men by Yuya in case of an emergency, arrived.

They were local roughnecks who had merely reached the state of a forged body. The man leading the group was a bald man, who was holding a pair of bronze hammers. He was actually the strongest of this group – in the middle state of a forged body. Frankly, they were part of the reason why Yuya had such a dominating influence in this small town.

They couldn't bear to witness their master being captured by Xu Yi, especially the bald guy, who was waving the bronze hammers, ready to fight.

Xu Yi stepped back when the bald man ran towards him with the hammers. In a flash of inspiration, Xu Yi decided to use Yuya as a shield, lifting him in the direction of the waving hammers.

The bald guy was taken aback, as it was already too late for him to stop the momentum of his hammers. Out of frustration, he was forced to fall down in order to evade hitting his master. The pair of heavy bronze hammers landed on the ground with a loud thud, destroying several nearby rocks.

The rest of the group swarmed towards Xu Yi, he then threw Yuya into the incoming crowd. It really was a messy scene - screaming, yelling, and the colliding sound of weapons. During the many-to-one fight, Xu Yi accidentally arrived at the place where the bronze hammers had previously landed. When he noticed them, he bent down and happily picked them up.

As a cultivator in the peak state of a forged body, the heavy bronze hammers were as light as a straw in Xu Yi's hands. Seeing that his weapons had been taken by Xu Yi, the bald man tried to get up and retake his valued hammers. However, Xu Yi didn't give him the chance to stand back up, as he had already smashed the bald guy on his chest with the bronze hammers. Immediately, the bald man was flying through the air at an unbelievable speed.

## Chapter 25 – Enforcing the Law

The bald man was thrown so far away, that he even splashed into the billowy Dragon Beard River.

Xu Yi rushed into the petrified crowd, while holding Autumn in his arms.

For the bald man, the pair of bronze hammers was merely a decorative accessory to threaten others. In a real fight, he didn't quite know how to properly handle them. However, in Xu Yi's hands, the hammers turned out to be lethal weapons.

Xu Yi had specially trained himself to bear remarkably heavy weight; the previous armor was a good example of this. He ravingly waved the hammers up and down, left and right. Those hit by these hammers felt their tendons snap and their bones break, with most of them only barely able to hang onto their lives. As Xu Yi continued spiraling the hammer, all of Yuya's hatchetmen fell down, while some of them were even blasted away into the river.

Within a couple of minutes, the battle was over and Xu Yi triumphantly walked out.

All the bystanders still gazed open-mouthed, as they had never watched such an intense and fast fight. Truly, it was for many the first time, that they got to observe peak state cultivators fight.

“Elder Mu never expected you to offer him a high price for the carp. He trusted you and believed that you would bring justice to this situation. But instead, you helped a villain do evil. The carp is worth at least one hundred taels of silver, why are you giving Elder Mu only two taels? According to the Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue, anyone who steals more than one hundred taels of silver should be given rod punishment – being beaten by a rod for three hundred times!” Xu Yi solemnly said, as he walked towards Yuya.

“Are you trying to browbeat me? The Minister of the White Horse County is my brother-in-law! Don’t try and scare me with the laws, I have a reliable backer patron in the government. You really are naïve!” Thinking of his brother-in-law, Yuya seemed to become confident again, even though the previous fight had scared him half to death.

Xu Yi didn’t care about any nepotism, he only believed in the righteousness of the laws and decrees. He held Autumn firmly in his arms and covered her eyes, trying to protect her from seeing the brutal scene in front of them.

“Uncle Xu, I want to watch while you slaughter these bad people [1].” Autumn spoke with boldness.

“Alright, but be careful.” Xu Yi whispered to Autumn in a soft and gentle voice.

He then turned back to Yuya: “You dare to despise and disregard the Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue, now your punishment has been upgraded to death.”

- Bang! -

Xu Yi waved the pair of bronze hammers, the momentum of which made the dust blow up in the air. When the cloud of dust finally disappeared, Yuya was found lying in a deep man-made hole, with blood smeared all over his body. Obviously, He was violently hit by the hammers.

It was a double-blow for the onlookers, both visually and spiritually. They never expected that the once supercilious Yuya had already died and that he had even left behind such a horrifying image.

As for Xu Yi, he walked towards the man in black clothing, dragging the pair of hammers behind him. In the sunset's afterglow, the shadow of the skinny Xu Yi was lengthened to an exaggerated size, which made him look like a celestial being descending down into this mortal world.

Everyone present felt awestruck, as they sensed the mental aura emanating from Xu Yi.

"It blows my mind that you're such an excellent fighter. You must've reached the peak state, haven't you? Quit the guard job, it's a waste of your talent. If you'd like to, I'd be more than happy to introduce you to a better place." The man in black clothing calmly said, as if he wasn't frightened at all.

"It is you who bullied Elder Mu, right?" Xu Yi shouted at the man in black clothing, without batting an eyelash. Although he heard the coaxing words from this man, he didn't believe for a second that this man



was being honest. Xu Yi was a man with unwavering loyalty, plus, the amoral personality of the man in black clothing really disgusted him. He would never mess with such a beast.

“Have you ever heard of the phrase, ‘If you can’t beat them, join them.’ You’re a wise man. Let me remind you that anyone who acts against the Black Dragon Palace, will find an early demise. Since you’ve already killed Yuya, you’ve made me lose face in front of so many people. We should just put an end to this little game. I’m afraid you’re still too young to realise, that a win-win situation is always the best choice. One more friend, one more road!” The man in black clothing restrained his anger and continued persuading Xu Yi. If he had any confidence in killing Xu Yi, he would definitely not be acting like this.

“How brazen you are!” Xu Yi disdainfully replied.

“You’ve bullied elders and children, as per the Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue, you should receive one hundred beats on your back with a rod. However, since there is no rod available here, I will use my hammers instead. One punch of my hammers will be sufficient.” Xu Yi scolded the man in black clothing as well as his bodyguards, after which he once again raised the pair of bronze hammers.

Both the bald man and Yuya had died by a single punch of these hammers, everyone knew what this meant. This thin and young man had decided to kill all of the evildoers.

In fact, the fishermen had a deep hatred for the man in black clothing; this wasn’t the first time he had shown up. They had long been bullied by this man, who would always act in a disgustingly cocky manner. However, today, somebody from the Plain Clothing Unit, a newly employed guard,

helped them to pay off their old scores. They were extremely excited to see what would happen next.

The man in black clothing could no longer control his pretended kindness towards Xu Yi. "Fxxk you! I'm sure you'll regret not joining the Black Horse Palace!" He barked like a crazy dog.

Suddenly, the man in black clothing took out a sharp dagger as well as an iron ball, which was about the size of a goose's egg. He then ran towards Xu Yi, as a sinister and ferocious look covered his face.

Previously, he was afraid to directly fight with Xu Yi, in case of being killed. The speed and strength of Xu Yi implied that he was probably in the late state of a forged body. While he himself had only just entered the late state of a forged body not long ago. He wasn't sure if Xu Yi had already reached the peak state, however, for someone under the age of thirty, the chance of entering the peak state was extremely small. Plus, Xu Yi's appearance indicated that he was definitely not yet thirty, even though the unshaven beard gave him a vicissitude touch. Also, If he truly was in the peak state, then why would he ever take such a lowly job as a simple guard?

As the man in black clothing considered all of this, he decided to fight Xu Yi head on, instead of dragging him back to the Black Dragon Palace. Even if Xu Yi had actually already reached the peak state, it wouldn't change much. It'd be equal to eggs being thrown at a rock, as his attacks would amount to nothing and besides, he didn't even have the chance to escape. Because, he represented the Black Dragon Palace and if he chose to be a coward and flee, it would definitely hurt the reputation of the Black Dragon Palace.

Eventually, he slowly stepped towards Xu Yi, and he reckoned his odds to survive were rather big, as he actually still had a couple of trump cards left.

.....

[1]: I had to make a note for this.... This is one cruel little 'cute' girl...

## Chapter 26 - Kowtow

The man in black clothing led his group of bodyguards and ran towards Xu Yi.

Xu Yi wielded the pair of hammers to defend himself from the incoming swords, arrows and spears. Each and every weapon, that was hit by the hammers, were bent and deformed. While the bodyguards who were hit by the hammers, instantly fell down and died.

Seeing that almost all of his bodyguards were killed in rapid succession by Xu Yi's bronze hammers, the man in black clothing rushed behind Xu Yi and aimed his dagger at Xu Yi's head.

Xu Yi sensed the incoming danger coming from behind him and successfully dodged the dagger. He then turned around and swung the hammers up towards the man in black clothing. Instantly, the colliding sound between the bronze hammers and the dagger exploded forth, as the man in black clothing had launched a second attack.

A peculiar situation occurred, both of the bronze hammers were cut into halves! It was like the dagger was cutting through a piece of tofu. Everyone was amazed and terrified by the sharpness of this dagger.

After destroying the hammers, the dagger's attack wasn't yet finished, as it continued on its track towards Xu Yi's head. The man in black clothing started to feel nervous, as he had even stopped breathing, while he was waiting for his dagger to pierce into Xu Yi's head

Fortunately however, after Xu Yi had seen his hammers being sliced through, he managed to just barely dodge this dagger. The man in black clothing was totally stupefied. Even in his wildest of dreams would he never have thought that Xu Yi's response would be this fast.

Admittedly, he had thrown the dagger with the best of his efforts, which was rather fast for the normal eye. But for Xu Yi, a man in the peak state of a forged body, the speed was as slow as a snail. Thus, he had ample of time to respond to the incoming dagger.

A small difference in cultivation would make a huge difference in speed and strength. The man in black clothing intended to play his trump card – the sharp dagger, to win this battle. However, to his disappointment, he failed miserably.

In the middle of his bewilderment, the man in black clothing felt horrified, as he realised that Xu Yi had already appeared in front of him. Xu Yi immediately lifted him up in the air by snipping his dazhui acupoint [1].

"How many evils have you committed..." Hardly had Xu Yi finished these words, or the iron ball in the man in black clothing's hand suddenly reshaped itself into countless pointed needles, which were quickly rushing towards Xu Yi's chest.

Once the dazhui acupoint was controlled, the man in black clothing should be absolutely defenseless. Xu Yi was quite confident about this, so he had lowered his vigilance. How could he have ever imagined, that the iron ball was such an amazing weapon. Even for someone in the 'an

ocean of qi' state, would it be difficult to escape from this sneak attack.

Due to the hypersensitivity of his soul, the moment when the needles cut into his clothing, Xu Yi quickly moved his left shoulder several centimeters to the side. Even though it was impossible to evade these needles, at least he tried his best to protect his heart, or he would die.

Eventually, the needles pierced through Xu Yi's flesh, several centimeters away from his heart. It truly was a narrow escape!

Since Xu Yi was in the peak state, his skin was as resilient as that of an ox. As long as his heart wasn't hurt, it meant nothing to him. At his current state, his organs weren't cultivated into a higher realm yet, which is why they still needed to be protected in a fight.

The man in black clothing immediately threw his fists towards Xu Yi, in an attempt to push the needles deeper into his flesh. The sense of danger drove Xu Yi to fight back and he even successfully grabbed the right wrist of the man in black clothing. After he held the wrist in his hands, he made a small movement with his hand and broke the wrist.

Soon, the needles inside Xu Yi's body came back out and changed back to the iron ball, which fell into the hand of the man in black clothing.

The needles left quite remarkable scars on Xu Yi's body, but there was no bleeding, as Xu Yi successfully controlled his muscles in a specific way to compress the blood.

Suddenly, Xu Yi took the iron ball and the sharp dagger from the man

in black clothing and tucked them into his waist pocket, which was made of tiger skin.

"You dare to attack government employees. As per the laws, you should be severely punished!" Xu Yi put one of his feet upon the chest of the man in black clothing.

"You bastard! Give me back the iron ball, you're in real trouble, you idiot!" The man in black clothing didn't show any signs of submission, he actually even retorted.

The man in black clothing was only one step from death, however, until now, he still cared deeply about his iron ball. This must be some rare treasure. Of course, Xu Yi wouldn't return the iron ball to him.

Barely had the man in black clothing's voice faded away, or Xu Yi bent down and cut the left thumb of the man in black clothing off.

"You've asked Elder Mu to kowtow three times to you, now, go and kowtow to Elder Mu for thirty times. I'll start counting. If you don't do it after I count to three, I'll continue to cut one finger or toe off at a time. Oh right, if we get to the point where you've got no fingers or toes left, then we'll continue with your nose and ears...Let's see how far I'll have to count and how many body parts you'll lose."

Frankly, Xu Yi was truly cruel to such an immoral and arrogant man. As he finished his little speech, he began to count.

"One, two..."

The man in black clothing excreted all of his energy and stood up, before he yelled at Xu Yi: "You really don't have a clue about the Black Dragon Palace, huh?! If you kill me today, my fellow brothers, with that I mean, three thousands members, will come to seek revenge for me..."

"three, four..." Xu Yi counted to four. As he had just said, after three, if the man in black clothing didn't kowtow to Elder Mu, he would cut one of his fingers off. Without any hesitation, he cut off a finger from the man in black clothing who was in the middle of his speech.

"AAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

"I swear! My father will tear you into pieces!" The man in black clothing cursed at Xu Yi. The distorted expression really made him look like a monster.

"Five... six... seven!"

Xu Yi continuously cut the fingers of the man in black clothing, until it left none on his left palm. The man in black clothing almost fainted due to the loss of blood. He struggled to make a sound.

"S... stop!"

When Xu Yi was about to call out "fifteen", the man in black clothing stopped him.



The man in black clothing was brought up in a prominent family, how could he bear this kind of suffering and horror. Although he swallowed all the pain in order to preserve some dignity, this was not for him, but for the Black Dragon Palace. But now, Xu Yi had completely broken his will and he had no choice left but to surrender.

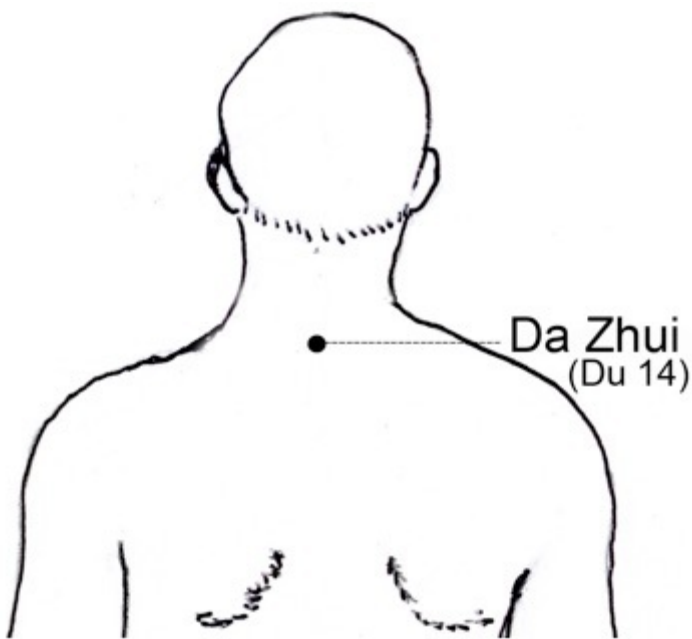
He kneeled down.

- Bang! Bang! Bang! -

The man in black clothing made a rapid succession of kowtows against the slate. He knocked his head so hard that it created a series of loud thuds. He might've worried that if he didn't knock hard enough, that Xu Yi wouldn't let him go. Or maybe, by doing so, he simply wanted to give vent to his disguised shame and rage.

.....

[1]: Dazhui acupoint picture:



## Chapter 27 – Guanan

The man in black clothing kowtowed for thirty times as required, before he stood up and fixed his eyes on Xu Yi, almost unblinkingly.

“It’s finished. My men were all killed, and I’ve been deeply insulted. Is that enough, will you finally let me go?”

The man in black clothing was filled with wrath; he had never, in his young lifetime, experienced this kind of insult. He was confident that Xu Yi would finally let him go, because he was still from the Black Dragon Palace. Usually, everyone would be horrified with the mere mentioning of this name. If he was killed, the Black Dragon Palace would definitely avenge his death at any cost and Xu Yi would have nowhere to hide. Therefore, he urged Xu Yi to let him go, so that he could bring more people here.

“Let you go? You think I did this merely out of selfish purpose, to vent my anger? No! I’m a government official, I did this according to the ‘Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue’. Let me tell you what crimes you’ve committed, poor man. You assembled people to disturb public order and beat civilians up. That’s number one. Number two, you premeditated to kill government employees. Don’t underestimate the authority of us simple guards; we represent the dignity of Empire Yue. You silly legal illiterate. Today, in front of all these fishermen, I will protect the dignity of the ‘Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue’, by killing you.” Xu Yi sternly said.

“I... I... But... Uh...” The man in black clothing tried to find some words, but all that came out of his mouth was gibberish. This was, because the man in black clothing felt terrified and feeble, after he finally realised

that Xu Yi never planned on letting him go.

His last, angry thoughts before he was killed, was that he should've never kowtowed on this lowly guard's command.

Xu Yi beheaded the man in black clothing without hesitation. It was a death with unblinking eyes. The man in black clothing was not prepared to die this early. He had only killed others and he had never thought about his own death.

Xu Yi strode to Elder Mu and supported him with one arm. Meanwhile, Autumn had already sweetly fallen asleep in Xu Yi's other arm.

The bystanders spread the news from mouth to mouth, they were stunned that it was a low-ranking guard, who had killed the man in black clothing. The whole street secretly celebrated the just death of the man in black clothing.

...

An hour later, General Gu found Xu Yi in a local hospital. Elder Mu just swallowed down a cup of tonic and, after a while, the bruises and the broken skin started forming scabs. Meanwhile, Autumn was sleeping on a nearby chair.

General Gu grabbed Xu Yi's arm and led him out. He anxiously bombarded him: "Brother, you are in big, big trouble! I don't know what I can do to help you out..."

Obviously, what Xu Yi had done today rattled General Gu's nerves. He never thought, that his new employee would be so reckless.

"General Gu, I don't get it. Did I do something wrong? I killed the people who had been disturbing the social order by continuously suppressing and bullying civilians. It's enshrined in the 'Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue' that those wrongdoers should be beheaded. I just did what I was supposed to do as a guard." Xu Yi raised his voice, showing his sense of justice.

Xu Yi's response left General Gu almost speechless. At the beginning, he failed to figure out why Xu Yi constantly mentioned the 'Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue'. Because in Hibiscus Town, the laws were merely convenient tools for the privileged class to punish common herds. But soon, he realised that the laws were just a kind of trick, which Xu Yi used to protect himself.

Today, in front of so many people, Xu Yi killed these evildoers in the name of the 'Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue'. Xu Yi was sure that these bystanders would spread the word, probably throughout the whole Guanan Province.

If that was the case, then nobody would dare to hurt Xu Yi; if they did, it was a showcase of their disrespect for the national laws of their empire. Xu Yi figured that no one would be so bold, as to challenge the dignity of the national law.

Although the local government was corrupted and full of nepotism, Xu

Yi honestly believed, that they wouldn't have the courage to punish him, because of the 'Law and Decrees of Empire Yue'.

"You are so smart!" General Gu exclaimed in excitement.

"However, you have to face reality – how about Elder Mu and Autumn? Even if they won't kill you, they will still kill those two. Does that mean you will protect them around the clock?" Gu expressed his concern.

"You're right. This is my biggest concern right now. Do you happen to have any ideas about this problem?" Xu Yi formed his brows into a frown.

To Xu Yi's surprise, General Gu responded with a secretive smile.

"General Gu, we were like old friends, when we first met each other. And it is because of you, that I'm able to be a guard here. I really appreciate everything that you've done for me." Xu Yi continued.

"Alright, brother, I won't simply stand by. Throughout Hibiscus Town, I can't find another young man as talented as you are. For you, it's just a matter of time to climb to the top of the social ladder. You're a real "dragon" and our little Hibiscus Town has already become too small for you... I mean, once you become prosperous, don't forget about us... Ok, let me simplify things! What I really need, is your promise – Whatever happens to you in the future, you're the permanent registered personnel of our Plain Clothing Unit. Please don't worry. I won't bind you to our unit. I just need your name attached to our Unit, to proof to others that we're reliable." General Gu explained.

"Don't worry, that's truly nothing. I am more than happy to do so." Xu Yi answered without hesitation.

"Haha, That's good! That's good!" General Gu merrily laughed out loud.

People in town had been quickly spreading the news about Xu Yi's upholding of the law. In every nook and cranny, Xu Yi's name could be heard. Based on these gossips, General Gu was sure Xu Yi must've entered the peak state of a forged body. Considering Xu Yi's age, he was bound to reach the state of an ocean of qi in the near future. At that time, the whole of Hibiscus Town would be glorified because of him.

"I've got a good solution for you. Just go to Guanan! There, you and the Mu Family will be safe."

"Guanan?" Xu Yi asked doubtfully.

"Unlike Hibiscus Town, Guanan is a vital place, where laws and regulations are strictly enforced. Any form of fighting is forbidden in the city, to prevent malicious cultivators from hurting civilians. There, people fully respect the 'Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue'. Even the influential Black Dragon Palace won't dare to kill you and your family in Guanan. However, you would have to face certain headaches."

"Headaches? What do you mean?" Xu Yi wasn't afraid of anything, as long as Elder Mu and Autumn were safe.

"Guanan is a place full of cultivators. Honestly, fights are unavoidable, despite the laws and regulations. Therefore, the local government allows

the cultivators to fight in certain approved places. Once the Guanan government receives the commission from one party, then the other party has to accept the challenge and prepare to fight. Otherwise, they'll be banished from the city."

"Frankly, the Black Dragon Palace is not easy to get rid of. Even if you're in Guanan, they'll search for you and seek for an opportunity to avenge their fallen comrade. Anyway, you have to be alert at all times. Oh right, as you may know, we have an office in Guanan as well. The original Chief Steward Qin has recently been transferred to another department. So you'll even be able to take over his job, once you arrive there. Perhaps, that this background as a government official, will aid you in some way."

## Chapter 28 – The Refined Iron

Xu Yi felt extremely fortunate to have met General Gu. If it wasn't for him, he wouldn't have taken the job as a guard, nor would he have had someone to aid him in these troubling times.

"I really, really appreciate your help!" Xu Yi thanked General Gu one more time.

"Don't worry, it's not worth mentioning." General Gu friendly replied. "Hurry up, you'd better immediately make your way to Guan'an. I've taken the liberties to arrange a carriage, which is already on its way here to pick you three up. Take care, my brother."

After saying their farewells, Xu Yi, together with Elder Mu and Autumn, rushed towards the gate of the hospital, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the carriage.

Several minutes later, two horses, hauling a large carriage, were approaching the gate. Before the carriage had even come to a complete standstill, Xu Yi, Elder Mu and Autumn had already entered the carriage. It immediately continued and they eventually disappeared into the foggy and dark night.

...

It was late at night, in the main hall of the White Horse Palace, a subdivision of the Black Dragon Palace, there were flaming furnaces aligned in two rows. A gigantic dragon sculpture on the ceiling, created



an ominous atmosphere in the red glaring light of the furnaces.

In the middle of the hall, there was a bronze armchair in the shape of a tiger, reflecting a solemn touch. The man who was quietly sitting in this armchair was named Jiang Shaochuan, the leader of White Horse Palace, as well as the father of the man in black clothing. He blankly stared into the direction of the gate, almost as if he had already passed away. He hadn't even let out a single word, ever since he was informed about the death of his son.

- Clop! Clop! Clop!-

Suddenly, a series of footsteps, which sounded like the scraping between a steel file and a copper sheet, broke the silence.

A man in soaked clothing ran towards Shaochuan, he seemed to be exceedingly overheated, as if he had just exited from a flaming furnace. He was the adviser of Shaochuan, who seemed to have something urgent to report to his master.

"Master, I... I have some bad news for you. Our young lord is... is... d... dead." The adviser said in a muffled voice, while sweat kept dropping down from his body.

"I know! My son is dead!" Shaochuan replied in a squeaky voice, which was as cold and filthy as the water in the sewers.

"Master, the refined iron, which was stolen by the young lord, was lost

as well!" The adviser raised his voice, as if to emphasize the importance of this matter.

"What? Say that again!" Shaochuan instantly bounced up from the chair, putting his wrinkled face right in front of his adviser, as he held the poor guy by his neck.

"I... I..." The adviser felt choked.

Luckily, Shaochuan released his hand and the adviser could finally repeat his previous words.

-Boom!-

Shaochuan felt like he was hit by a bolt of lightning, he rushed into his secret room. After a while, he came back out with an uncontrollable rage. He even kicked down one of the furnaces. However, this was far from enough to express his fury, he immediately grabbed a large sword from behind a folding screen [1], slashing it in all directions. Several minutes later, the once splendid looking hall, had turned into the aftermath of a battlefield.

"Son of a bitch! Son of a bitch! I will not shed a tear over your death!" He furiously screamed, as he finally stopped his maniacal behavior and put his sword away.

"Master, we have no time to grumble. Right now, to minimize the consequences, we have to regain the refined iron from that guy who killed the young lord. We must find it before the boss from the Black

Dragon Palace senses anything unusual." The adviser anxiously suggested.

Shaochuan replied with a firm nod, trying to pull himself back together.

...

The refined iron was originally stolen from the Southeastern Business Escort Group three months ago. The group was hired by the Guanan government to carry precious tributes to the Empire. It was a top-confidential task. However, the White Horse Palace had discovered their route, due to the help of an unknown informer and they had, shortly after, assembled a group of well-trained cultivators in the Sky Hawk Cliff. Eventually, they launched a successful ambush and looted the treasures from this business group.

The refined iron was found in a beautifully-decorated cassette. Shaochuan was obsessed with it from the moment, when he first lied his eyes on it. However, as per the rules, anything collected has to be forwarded to the Black Dragon Palace, after which the profits would be divided in a certain ratio.

However, the refined iron was such a gorgeous treasure, that Shaochuan was rather reluctant to submit it to the Black Dragon Palace. The adviser had read his mind at this time and had come up with a good plan. He had killed all the members, who had joined in the sneak attack, to make sure that there were no witnesses who knew about the refined iron.

Looking at his adviser, Shaochuan had understood the purpose of

killing these people. He had then shot a wicked smile to his adviser, before he had tucked the refined iron into his pocket.

Shaochuan had then hidden the refined iron in his secret room. Only when it was late at night and no one else was around, would he enter his secret room. So he could open the cassette and stroke and scrutinize the refined iron with great satisfaction.

Unexpectedly, however, his good-for-nothing son had stolen the refined iron and had even lost it. At this moment, Shaochuan's heart was saturated with horror and fury, leaving him no space to lament on the death of his son.

If the refined iron was in the hands of his enemies, they would certainly bring his ugly behavior to light. Then, he'd definitely be killed by the Black Dragon Palace.

"Master, don't worry. I heard that all the bystanders were local civilians. They claimed that the guard was hurt by an iron ball, I suppose that must be our refined iron. Since it's a rare treasure, I bet the guard won't show it in public." The adviser explained to relieve some of his master's anxiety.

"This guard was actually a newcomer in Hibiscus Town and now he, as well as the old man and the girl who were with him, have already travelled to Guanan. It's obvious that he has prepared himself well, in case we would try and kidnap the old man and the little girl. Right now, the quickest way to kill him is to invite him to a fight in Guanan. Our priority right now should be to write a letter to the Guanan government and investigate his whereabouts." The adviser continued.

“Priority? Hmmm, our priority right now is to keep this a secret. I would say, the less people that know about the refined iron, the better. What if I am the only who knows about this?” Suddenly, Shaoshan cut off the head of his adviser with his bare hands. Immediately, he kicked the head into the left furnace. Soon after, a disgusting scorching flavor filled the air.

“I swear, I will kill you! I love that refined iron more than I love my own son!” Shaochuan stared at the flames, gritting his teeth.

.....

It was a cloudy morning, the doors and windows were all closed because of the blowing gale. A half burned red candle was flickering in the air. Elder Mu swallowed down a bowl of restoratives. He then put a big hamper in Autumn’s room, in case she would be hungry when she woke up. Meanwhile, Xu Yi was sitting in the main hall, meditating.

This building was not big - the front part was used as an office, while the rear part was used as a living-and bedroom. A kitchen and toilet were also conveniently available. In the middle, there even was a lively yard, where beautifully flourishing banyan [2] grew on both sides. It was a beautiful summer resort.

It had been years since the Hibiscus government set this building up to accommodate government employees who went to Guanan. It was also the place to receive and send out official letters.

Xu Yi stood up from the chair and collected some official letters. Later, he locked the guest room, attaching a note to the door. He then quietly left.

After going down the hustling street, Xu Yi directly entered a wine workshop, where he spent an ingot of silver to buy a kettle of green bamboo leaf liquor, which was already preserved for ten years. He then inquired about the location of the Iron Cat Alley, before he dashed towards his destination.

Xu Yi knew that the Black Dragon Palace wouldn't be lenient to him. Even if it wasn't for the man in black clothing, the mysterious iron ball would definitely stir up some ripples, or even storms in the cultivating world!

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[1]: folding screen: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folding\\_screen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folding_screen)

[2]: banyan: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banyan>

## Chapter 29 - Rules

Xu Yi took the iron ball out of his waist pocket and started to observe it, with growing fascination.

Last night, Xu Yi had tested this iron ball and had put it in one of his palms. Once he managed to flow his strength and qi to his palm, the iron ball could change into various forms of weapons. The most impressive one, was a long and pointy spear, roughly three Zhang [1] in length.

What excited Xu Yi the most, was that the changing process only took a mere second, remaining absolutely soundless while it changed. This made it a perfect weapon in a real fight, as opponents wouldn't realise the mere existence of it, until it was already too late for them to escape.

However, Xu Yi had mixed feelings towards this iron ball. On one hand, he really, really liked this ball. However, on the other hand, he was sure he wasn't the only one who was interested in it. If he wanted to permanently possess this iron ball, he had no choice but to elevate his level of cultivation in Wu Dao, in case anyone from a higher realm would come by and try to snatch the ball.

...

Currently, he was only a newcomer in Guanan. He had to familiarise himself with the local situation as soon as possible. Obviously, the best candidate to consult about this issue, would be Teacher Zhou.

The Iron Cat Alley was rather hard to find – the alley was so narrow that only two people could squeeze along each other.

A pair of old men was playing chess, squatting on the threshold. Xu Yi walked towards them and inquired about Teacher Zhou's residence. Finally, with great efforts, Xu Yi found Teacher Zhou residence, which was a shabby cottage.

The weather was extremely cold that day; Teacher Zhou was sitting on a bamboo chair, with a thick blanket covering his body. While his rhythmic snoring sound lingered in the air.

Xu Yi stepped in front of Teacher Zhou, as he had figured out a brilliant idea to wake him up. Putting the urn of wine on the nearby table, Xu Yi opened the lid, letting the fragrance come out. Suddenly, as expected, the sleeping Teacher Zhou jumped up, as quickly as the response of a cat when its tail was stepped on.

"I haven't drunk any wine for three days. Look, I feel so lassitude without wine. That's why I am lying on this damn broken chair. In this world, only wine can wake me up. Haha, I just dreamed that I had died from the lack of wine. Soon I turned into a ghost and I kept chasing you for the two kettles of wine you owed me. Now, you're actually here! What a coincidence!" Teacher Zhou slapped his own cheek to make sure he wasn't still dreaming.

Teacher Zhou hastily went into the kitchen, dashing out with a ladle. He then dipped the ladle into the urn, and scooped some of the wine up.

"Excellent! This must be the ten-year old wine from the Drunkard



Workshop. You sure are generous to me!" Teacher Zhou generously sipped the wine.

Teacher Zhou carefully ladled out the wine and poured it into a cup. He then sealed the urn and carried it into the kitchen. Later, he held the cup, sipping the wine enjoyably.

"What do you want from me? I know an urn of wine is equivalent to more than two kettles. Today, I will take as many question as possible. Hey, don't dilly-dally. Or else the bastards in the Black Dragon Palace will find you." Teacher Zhou said.

"How do you know about this?" Xu Yi was rather surprised.

"Young man, it has been years since someone killed these evildoers in the name of the 'Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue'. You've done a great job and the news has already travelled from Hibiscus Town, all the way to Guan'an. You've already become rather famous!" Teacher Zhou replied, with a proud expression.

"Now, that the Guan'an government knows what I've done. Would the Black Dragon Palace still dare to come for me?" Xu Yi asked, as he felt rather puzzled about this.

Teacher Zhou sipped the wine before he answered Xu Yi's question. "You're absolutely right. Many government officials are in favor of what you did. At least, you represented the authority of the government, as well as the 'Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue'. You know, I heard that General Gao, the guards leader in Guan'an, swore to protect you. Nevertheless, the Magistrate of Guan'an said: 'Without rules, nothing can

be done.' Young man, you have to prepare yourself for the fight."

"What? What do the rules mean here? Can you be more specific, please?" Xu Yi urged Teacher Zhou.

"Alright, have you ever heard of the proverb, which says, if you have money, you can make even the devil turn the millstone. Even though General Gao intended to protect you from any fight, the Magistrate didn't agree to his proposal. You know why? There's an old rule, that if someone invites you to fight, you have to accept, otherwise you'll be banished from Guanan. The Magistrate wouldn't be so silly, as to break this rule simply because of you. Once the rule is broken, their profit chain will also be broken. Because anyone who sends out an invitation to fight, shall submit a certain amount of money to the government. It is commonsense, that they don't want to lose this business by breaking the rules. Do you understand? I suggest you prepare yourself, the sooner the better." Teacher Zhou replied with a subtle smile.

"Ah...I see. But I still have some confusion about these fights. I heard from General Gu, that once the government accepted the ten golden coins submitted by the inviter, the fight would automatically come into effect. But what if the inviter is in an ocean of qi, while the invitee is well below that state, will he still have to accept the fight? If he rejects the fight, will he still be banished?" Xu Yi had been worried that the Black Dragon Palace would perhaps send someone far beyond his ability. If this was the case, then he was doomed to be beaten to death.

Teacher Zhu stroked his mustaches and continued: "The bloodsuckers, oh, I mean the government officials who design this game aren't a bunch of fools. They won't allow such loopholes to exist, or they would quickly lose their long-term business. It may surprise you, that the money annually received from these fighting events, account for more than two-

thirds of the total taxes collected in Guanan.”

“The officially approved fights have certain rules that have to be followed, that is, any inviter and invitee should be on roughly the same level of cultivation. For example, if an inviter is in the state of an ocean of qi, while the invitee is only in the state of a forged body, then the government won’t approve it. Plus, the peak state of a forged body is also not allowed to fight with anyone below the peak state. That’s the rule. Kid, don’t worry about this.”

Xu Yi felt extremely relieved after hearing this. If the opponent was in the forged body stage, he felt rather confident in achieving victory.

Teacher Zhou glanced at Xu Yi and warned him: “I know what you’re thinking about right now. Since you’ve got a powerful soul, you’re not afraid about anyone in the forged body realm. However, remember well, that there’ll always be someone who has even greater talents. Don’t be cocky. If you underestimate the power of the Black Dragon Palace, you’ll have lost before the fight even starts. They’ve got numerous peak state cultivators! If you’re to survive, you have to be the number one in the peak state.”

Xu Yi was taken aback by Teacher Zhou’s insightful remarks, especially when his overconfidence was discovered. Actually, he was a little bit horrified as he couldn’t seem to hide anything from Teacher Zhou.

“I hate the long face that you wear. Are you mad at me? I’m simply telling you the truth. Look, when you killed the young lord of the White Horse Palace, your ability in Wu Dao was no longer able to be hidden. As for your soul, we had a couple of discussions several days ago. Anyone below the state of an ocean of qi won’t ask those questions about the

soul, but you did. That’s why I know you have a powerful soul.”

“Only those who have experienced the force of the soul, will ask such questions. For your age, it’s almost impossible to have reached the peak state. The only way that I can convince myself to believe this, is to believe in the shocking power of your soul.”

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[1]: Zhang: a unit of length, equal to 3.3 meters.

## Chapter 30 – Eastern City

Xu Yi was fully absorbed in Teacher Zhou's intelligent remarks.

However, he felt rather uncomfortable, as Teacher Zhou had turned out to be a worldly-wise man, who was able to see straight through him. In front of Teacher Zhou, Xu Yi felt it was impossible to hide his strengths and weaknesses.

"I'm but a useless old man, slowly drifting through the rest of my life. So, don't worry, I'm tight-mouthed." Teacher Zhou somehow sensed Xu Yi's suspicious mind, so he promised he wouldn't leak any information concerning Xu Yi.

"You've greatly aided me, Teacher Zhou. I won't forget your generosity. I would never doubt you." Xu Yi hurriedly tried to flatter Teacher Zhou.

Xu Yi admitted that, occasionally, he would be very cynical and conceited. He was, after all, a loyal man. In other words, he fully trusted in his teacher and would never betray him.

"Oh, come on. Don't hoodwink me with generosity, it's an honest exchange. Ah... I know your trick, flatter me and get free answers. Haha, I won't take your bait." Teacher Zhou said jokingly. He then grabbed the cup again, drinking like a fish.

"Actually, I've already paid the Drunkard Workshop to send you wine at a 15-day interval. The money I paid is enough to supply you for a whole year. I hope you will enjoy it." Xu Yi said with a sincere smile.

Teacher Zhou intently focused his eyes on Xu Yi. Without saying another word, he walked to a nearby room and shortly after returned, carrying a brown box.

"Previously, you had asked me why someone could exert three-oxen strength within the realm of a forged body, remember? Look, the item in this box is titled 'Dominating Strength', which will teach you how to gain that strength." Teacher Zhou handed the box over to Xu Yi.

On hearing the words 'three-oxen strength', Xu Yi eyes lit up in excitement. He opened the box, in which he found a thin piece of black paper. To Xu Yi's surprise, it was made of iron.

"Originally, this 'Dominating Strength'-manual was found in a secret place by my Sifu. If you cultivate accordingly, you will be able to exert three-oxen strength, even in the forged body stage. However, not everyone is able to comprehend and learn this technique. You require an energetic physical body and a sensitive soul to achieve the desired strength. However, the most amazing part is, that it will triple the strength every time you breakthrough into the next realm..." Teacher Zhou patiently explained.

Like all other cultivators, techniques were like an unattainable dream for Xu Yi. Now, however, he was extremely thrilled and he couldn't wait to read it. As he started reading, he murmured: "Top-level chilian herb, eyes of an aged snail, gallbladder of a bear... Teacher, why are all these medicines required for the cultivation process?"

Back when he was cultivating the Crazy Ox Fist, Xu Yi had only rigidly followed the qi chart, which showed the flowing route of the qi in the body. Plus, he would occasionally use the low-grade Oolong herb, which was the only herb he had to replenish his energy. It was fair to say, that he had reached the peak state of a forged body merely by diligence, rather than the help of external assistance, such as rare herbs or medicines.

“No offense, young man, but you’re almost an illiterate in Wu Dao. I’m wondering how it was possible for you to enter the peak state of a forged body. Alright, let me take advantage of my seniority and share my knowledge on this subject with you. Look, all special techniques require rare medicine to aid, or even allow, the cultivation process. You know, compared to nature, our human energy is rather limited. Therefore, we’ve got to exploit nature’s energy and mix it with our own. But how do we do this? One way is by eating these rare medicines. However, I should warn you... It’s only after you’ve reached a certain point in the cultivation of a technique, that nature’s energy will harmoniously blend within your body. Taking the ‘Dominating Strength’-technique as an example, the timing of eating the medicine is crucial.” Even though Teacher Zhou seemed to be rather startled by Xu Yi’s lack of knowledge, he seemed to be rather happy to share his knowledge with this youngster.

“Frankly, it was already twenty years ago, when I obtained this ‘Dominating Strength’-technique. Both my Sifu and I were cultivating this technique, but neither of us succeeded. We actually accumulated all of the medicines required, however, even with the aid from these medicines, we didn’t manage to overcome the obstacles of reversing our tendons and vessels. We painstakingly attempted to overcome this obstacle, however, sadly, we would only end up completely exhausted and in unbearable pain, both physically and spiritually. Kid, you possess a powerful soul, I’m confident that the ‘Dominating Strength’-technique will become well-known because of you.” Teacher Zhu continued.

"I can't possibly thank you enough, Teacher Zhou. I'm truly endlessly grateful for your help!" Xu Yi couldn't help, but express his gratitude to Teacher Zhou.

During the previous two years, he had seldom had access to the theories regarding Wu Dao. But he did remember Liao Chen's words – Training manuals for special techniques in Wu Dao were extremely rare to get a hold on, especially for those top techniques.

The Tranquil Fist, for instance, was regarded as Elder Feng's most-cherished technique. Although, it took quite some time to accumulate the required strength and had side-effects after overdrawing your strength, it was still rare and precious. In comparison, the Dominating Strength was an upgraded version of the Tranquil Fist, as it will add its strength, after you reach the three-oxen strength. It was justifiable to say, that the Dominating Strength was the rarest technique Xu Yi had seen in this world so far.

"It's far too early to thank me. After all, I'm not giving you all of this for free. Since you've accepted the 'Dominating Strength'-manual, I expect that you'll make sure that I'll never run out of wine for the rest of my life. Deal?" Teacher Zhou retorted Xu Yi's thanks with this request.

"This is priceless. Buying some wine for the rest of your life, it's nothing compared to this manual." Xu Yi replied.

"The technique is as useless as a piece of wastepaper to me, while the wine is my lifeblood. I exchanged some wastepaper for my lifeblood, isn't it the perfect deal?" Teacher Zhou explained.



“Alright, from now on, I’ll be responsible for supplying you with wine for the rest of your life.” Xu Yi knew he owed Teacher Zhou a lot more, than a couple kettles of wine...

“Ah, deal! Alright, I’m going to get some more sleep now. You’d better not lose anymore of your precious time in advance to your fight. Oh right, before I forget, the Eastern City is a nice place to visit, I suggest you to go there and have a look around.” After saying these last few words, Teacher Zhou went back to sleep.

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The arc-shaped stone gate was the entrance to the Eastern City. Peeking through the gate, Xu Yi saw a boundless place – a heaven for cultivators!

The street was extremely wide, enough for ten horses to run parallel. The towering mansions and pavilions were closely built together, like the teeth of a comb. Dragons and phoenixes were sculptured on the eaves of these buildings, probably serving as a token. Xu Yi was instantly intoxicated by the atmosphere of this city.

The people walking on the streets were all distinctively dressed: The monks that walked here, had wrapped themselves in loose cassocks, holding a cane in their hands. The succubus's wore straightjackets, emphasising their seductive curving body. The Daoist Priests walked barefooted and in plain clothing. The Confucian scholars were waving their folding fans, showcasing their learned and refined manner.

However, among all of them, the saddle beasts were creating the most

attractive scene. Lions, tigers, deer and elephants, you name it. The most impressive one, was a giant python, slithering down the street, while carrying a young man with goggle-eyes.

Soon after, Xu Yi saw a drunken man in white clothing coming from the wine workshop, sitting on his saddle beast, which was a gigantic eagle. After he murmured something to the eagle, it flew up high into the sky and soon after, they disappeared in the clouds.

All of this reminded Xu Yi of an old saying – (腰缠十万贯, 骑鹤下扬州)  
“Millionaires ride cranes to tour Yangzhou [1].”

Xu Yi stood rooted to the ground, amazed by this mysterious, yet marvelous, ‘new world’.

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[1]: This reminded Xu Yi of his prior world, our modern world, where a beautiful translator, who goes by the name Claire, lived near Yangzhou. Many people sought after her hand, but in the end, only those fortunate few, who had a fortune behind them, were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the pure beauty that is her.

## Chapter 31 – Qinghua

Xu Yi was in the middle of the street, observing his surroundings, when a round-faced man popped up with an exaggerated smile. The stranger bowed to Xu Yi and introduced himself: "It must be your first time coming to Easter City. If you aren't escorted by a local guide, you'll probably go astray in this vast city. Luckily, I'm a local guide, who is familiar with the different buildings and people in this city. I'd be more than happy to offer you my services."

"I'm not used to these fancy words, just give me an acceptable price, ok?" Xu Yi straightforwardly replied.

The guide felt a little bit embarrassed by these straightforward words, which left him flabbergasted.

Without spending another second on this so-called 'guide', Xu Yi strode down the street. He felt rather confident, that in such a large and populated city, guides were as common as the tiles on the street. He figured that it shouldn't be impossible to encounter a better guide.

"Five gold coins! No bargaining!" The guide ran after Xu Yi and cried out loudly. He made his living by guiding people throughout this city, how would he make ends-meet if he was to let every potential business opportunity walk away like this.

"What?!" Xu Yi was taken aback by this crazy price. Yesterday, he spent only two taels of silver for an extravagant meal. If the five gold coins were exchanged into silver, even by the official rate, it'd be enough to cover for all the food he could possibly consume in an entire year.

The guide carefully watched Xu Yi's response. Soon, he explained: "I'm not just simply a guide, you know, I'll also be responsible for answering all the questions along the way. Oh, also, my bargaining capability will surely save you lots of money, if you decide to purchase anything here that is. For outsiders like you, the merchants will rip you off. Believe me, you'll lose a lot more than a mere 5 gold coins without me!"

Xu Yi kept walking, showing no interest at all. Indeed, Xu Yi intended to compare the prices before he settled down on a deal. After all, he had a long list of items he intended to buy, which would surely cost him a small fortune. Right now, he had to be rather cautious with his money.

Nevertheless, the guide stucked very close to Xu Yi, very much like he was an unshakable sticky candy. He bombarded Xu Yi with negative examples of newcomers, who'd saved their money by refraining from hiring a guide. All of these examples ended in the big local shops ripping these people off.

"Shut up! You don't have to explain all these details to me, I really don't care that much about it. Honestly, my main purpose of this trip is to purchase some medicines, which will cost at least two hundred gold coins, I suppose. Now, listen clearly... I've got a plan." XuYi was rather annoyed by the guide, who was buzzing around him like a mosquito.

Soon, Xu Yi leaned close to the ear of the guide and whispered: "My plan is, you help me do the bargaining and I will let you take 10% of the money that was saved from the original quota. Hey, man, think about it. Let me know if you accept it or not. If not, just get out of my way already!"

Now, that the fight between the Black Dragon Palace and himself was unavoidable, Xu Yi was desperate for the medicines, that were required for cultivating the Dominating Strength-technique, no matter how much they'd cost. But, right now, he had basically no clue, about where these medicines would be found and how much they'd actually cost him. At this moment, he was just like a headless chicken who was lost in the wild jungle. What the guide offered was actually a timely help to Xu Yi.

"Deal! I totally accept it!" The guide instantly replied, jumping and dancing as if he had just won the jackpot. Xu Yi couldn't help but roll his eyes, as this guide looked like a true clown.

The guide calculated that, what Xu Yi offered, might very well exceed five gold coins. He was familiar with the market, and usually, he could persuade the shopkeeper to take the deal at a 30% discount. Now, since Xu Yi's estimated budget was two hundred gold coins, if the shopkeeper quoted three hundred for all of the medicines together, he was confident to get it at around two hundred. Which meant, that he'd help Xu Yi save around one hundred gold coins in total. According to the 10% commission, he would end up making at least 10 gold coins.

After a while, Xu Yi and the guide exchanged names. The guide was called Yuan Qinghua, a senior guide with nearly eight years of experience.

Along the way, Qinghua kept introducing local scenic spots and gave anecdotes about these places, occasionally, he would also insert his own opinions, full of witty remarks. Xu Yi was quite amused by the guide's company.

When they passed over a stone bridge, in the near distance, the boisterous fighting arena caught their attention. The arena was about

three Zhang in height, and twenty Zhang in width. Walking closer, they saw two strong candidates, who were intensely fighting with each other, while sweat was streaming down their faces.

"If you're interested in that fight, why don't you gamble on the results? I'll even give you some tips if you want." Qinghua said, as he pointed at the arena.

"Gambling? What do you mean?" Xu Yi got completely caught off-guard.

Qinghua was also shocked that Xu Yi didn't even seem to know what gambling was. However, he then cleared his throat and explained patiently: "All fights will end up with a winner and a loser, right? Viewers will bet on the candidates and if their candidate wins, they'll win a nice amount of money. As you may know, there are hundreds of fights going on in Guanan, if it wasn't for the gambling, no one would watch, let's say, two candidates who are only in the middle state of a forged body."

"I couldn't agree more with you. But how can the viewers know the cultivating state of these candidates?" Xu Yi nodded, but he still felt slightly doubtful.

"Haha, the cultivating state of each candidate is indicated by the flag placed on the corner of the arena. Look, in Empire Yue, we have five colors to represent our social status. This arena mimics that standard, categorizing candidates into five groups by five different colors. Purple, black, white and green represent four different level in the forged body realm. If you take a look at the flag, it's white, right? Then these candidates are in the middle state of a forged body." Qinghua colorfully explained, with a big smile on his face.

“Gold, purple, black, white and green. Why does the forged body realm use four colors? What about the other realms, there’s only one color for all of those?”

“When a cultivator surpasses the realm of a forged body, it will be a turning point in his life. He will be invited by celebrities and high-ranking officials, or probably become one of their hangers-on. I haven’t seen a gold flag raised up ever since I was born. Plus, in recent years, those prominent families gradually formed alliances with each other. Whenever a dispute would occur, they’ll mediate it behind the curtains. That’s why, there is almost no fights going on between cultivators in higher realms.” Qinghua further explained.

“Ah...I get it. My apologies, I still have one other question. What if one of the candidates intentionally disguises his level of cultivation and bets on himself to reap the money? Oh, I know, there will be policies to avoid such scenarios from happening. I just want to know how? Forgive me, I’m a curious boy.” Xu Yi was hungry for more information about these fights, so he eagerly asked away.

With the help of Qinghua, Xu Yi quickly familiarized himself with the local environment.

## Chapter 32 – The Exquisite Pavilion

Qinghua stared at Xu Yi, "No offense, but you're probably the most inquisitive one among all of my customers. Yeah, you're right that they take specific precautions to avoid any form of misbehaviour. Look, on the left side of the flag, there are several seniors sitting behind a long desk. They're the judges of this arena. Actually, prior to the fight, each candidate is asked to offer a drop of blood for the panel to test. Because the blood carries a lot of information about the cultivator. The density and color of the blood, for example, varies in different states of cultivation. The test ensures a fair and equal fight. "

Upon hearing these words, Xu Yi sighed with relief. Although Teacher Zhou had already told him that the initiator couldn't challenge someone of a lower realm, Xu Yi still feared that the Black Dragon Palace might play a dirty trick, by hiring someone in a higher realm than he was. However, after Qinghua's words, he was reassured.

Qinghua tried to persuade Xu Yi to make a bet on the ongoing fight, but he soon realised that Xu Yi had absolutely no intention or interest in gambling, so he gave up on these intentions. However, he rattled on about some other topics and even inquired what realm of cultivation Xu Yi had reached. This guide was really something; he could talk your head off if you didn't stop him.

"Oh, My Goodness, you're in the peak state of a forged body! How old are you?" Qinghua was stunned by Xu Yi's impressive achievements in Wu Dao.



"I'm thirty years old." Xu Yi lied.

Actually, Xu Yi was just eighteen years old. However, if he revealed his true age, he'd be famous in the cultivation world and he didn't want to put himself in the spotlight, especially when he was sought for by both the Black Dragon Palace, as well as the Zhou Family. Luckily, to some extent, the uncombed hair and disheveled appearance successfully concealed Xu Yi's young age.

"A still tongue makes a wise head. Most cultivators couldn't reach the peak state before the age of thirty. Throughout Guanan, only five cultivators, who were all from resourceful and prominent families, obtained the peak state before the age of thirty. Trust me, in the near future, you'll become famous in Wu Dao!" Qinghua exclaimed in excitement.

"Time is limited, we need to go faster and get things done." Xu Yi coldly urged Qinghua.

As he realised that Xu Yi wasn't fond of this topic, he submissively nodded his head and led Xu Yi to the main street.

An hour later, they arrived in front of a glamorous store.

"After walking through this door, you'll be able to obtain any and every medicine your heart desires! This place boasts all kinds of medicines, some of which we've probably never even heard of. Shall we go in?" Qinghua passionately suggested.

A gigantic gate stood erect in front of the store, which was almost 17 meters width and 10 meters high. To match the size of this gate, the threshold was also designed in an exaggerated size and fashion. Both were made of pure bronze, gleaming in the sunlight.

In the middle of the lintel was a line of elegant calligraphy, which gave the name of this store – The Exquisite Pavilion.

If you stared at the name for several seconds, it would become miraculously vivid and would transform itself into a dragon, which flew within the framework of the nameplate. Soon, the dragon settled down and changed itself back into calligraphy.

“This name plate was the brainchild of a famous architect. The material used for this plate, the uncut jade, was extracted from the faraway Easter Sea. The most amazing part, is that three snake goblins are casted inside the calligraphy. Did you see them moving? No other store in Guanan can replicate this exquisite design.” Qinghua reckoned that it was the right timing to introduce this store, as Xu Yi was ecstatically staring at the nameplate.

“Snake goblins? Do goblins exist in this mortal world?” Xu Yi whispered so quietly, that only he himself could clearly hear his question.

Since ghosts were no strangers to Xu Yi, which had made him feel rather used to anything supernatural, he didn’t linger on this mysterious name plate. Instead, he directly entered the store.

The grandiose decoration inside the store was breathtaking. Xu Yi stood still, dumbfounded like a blockhead, forgetting to take another

step.

The columns were made of white jade and the bricks on the ground were made of black iron. It seemed as if all of the materials that were used in this architecture were exquisite and rare, distinguishing itself from other stores. Dragons and phoenixes were vividly sculptured on the walls, rendering a touch of imperial elegance. What a magnificent place to visit this was!

People clustered everywhere in the hall. Each customer was accompanied by a salesman. Business in The Exquisite Pavilion was booming.

"What can I do for you, my distinguished guests?" A saleswoman walked towards Xu Yi and Qinghua, speaking with an alluring voice. Her long brown hair and her shapely figure grabbed the attention of bystanders. But, her smile was really weird, which was more like an inanimate poker face.

"We need a VIP room!" Qinghua conceitedly instructed the saleswoman.

"Alright, please follow me, my dear guests!"

The saleswoman straightened her back, showing off her plump breasts. She kept leering at Qinghua along the way.

Any customers who spent more than a hundred gold coins, would be invited to a VIP room. Since Xu Yi had already confided to Qinghua his

target budget, two hundred gold coins, Qinghua had requested a VIP room in advance.

Soon, they arrived in the VIP room. As they sat down, two pretty and dazzling young ladies served them tea, fruit, snacks and other exquisite food.

Never in his lifetime, had Xu Yi enjoyed this level of service. Meanwhile, he started to curiously look around. Actually, it was a little bit boring waiting in this room. Soon, the cup of tea in front of Xu Yi was finished. He also pigged himself on the delicious snacks. Soon after, he lazily lay down in the armchair, observing his surroundings.

Xu Yi didn't realise, that everyone in the room was staring at him with an unbelievable expression. Qinghua was embarrassingly blushing. The ladies stopped smiling, wondering if they should call the bodyguards to send them out. As the crude manner of Xu Yi shocked the ladies, as they had never seen any guest eating and drinking so rudely. They even thought that Xu Yi and Qinghua pretended themselves as guests only for the delicious food.

"Excuse me, what are you going to buy from us?" The brown-haired saleswoman sharpened her voice, no longer showing her smile.

"Top-level chilian herb, eyes of aged snail, gallbladder of bear..." Qinghua replied.

These medicines were exactly what Xu Yi needed to start his cultivation of the Dominating Strength technique.

Hardly had Qinghua's voice faded away, or the saleswoman forced her exaggerated smile back onto her face and called in another two servants. She politely said goodbye to them, before she went to the warehouse to check the stock availability of these medicines.

"We apologize for keeping you waiting. We're sorry to inform you that two of the medicines are currently unavailable, the eyes of aged snail and the gallbladder of a bear. Maybe you can buy the available medicines first. And we'll keep you updated on the availability of these two items, that are currently out of stock."

## Chapter 33 – Purchasing

“How come? The Exquisite Pavilion is famous for its large variety of cultivating items, it’s a pity that you don’t even have the eyes of an aged snail and the gallbladder of a bear...” Qinghua’s face suddenly froze, as dissatisfaction was quickly showing up in his whole demeanor. Indeed, he was rather embarrassed in front of Xu Yi. After all, moments ago, he had bragged that The Exquisite Pavilion would have all of the medicines a cultivator could wish for.

Xu Yi’s eyebrows changed into a deep furrow and he let out a desperate sigh, as the hope in his heart had quickly sunk to rock bottom. Without these two medicines, he was unable to cultivate the Dominating Strength technique, which was his top priority in order to become the best cultivator in the peak state of a forged body. Although Teacher Zhou warned Xu Yi that the unbearable pain, which occurred when reversing your tendons and vessels, would deter the cultivation process, Xu Yi was confident he could overcome it as long as he managed to obtain all of the required medicines. Because, back when he was wearing the heavy armor, he had already experienced extreme physical torments.

“I entrusted you to purchase these medicines for me. Please appoint a reliable purchaser to find the medicines throughout Guanan. I won’t leave until I see the medicines.” Xu Yi urgently instructed Qinghua.

“Distinguished guest, if we don’t have these two medicines in stock, then no other places in Guanan will have it either. The eyes of an aged snail and the gallbladder of a bear, both of them are hard to come by. Most of the time, these rare items are sold out as soon as they arrive.” The brown haired lady explained.

"What? You mean we have to count on our luck to buy these two damn items?!" Qinghua jumped up and down, like an irate barking dog. He worried that his commission would be heavily shrunk, because of the unavailability of these two medicines.

"Shut up!" Xu Yi glared at Qinghua, showing contempt for the latter's unwise manner. Anger wouldn't solve anything.

"Would you please let me know what I should do to obtain these medicines as soon as possible? I will greatly appreciate your advice." Xu Yi behaved like a gentleman, which was a little bit odd compared to his eating manners from before.

The lady turned her focus to the raunchy-looking Xu Yi, suddenly realising that he was actually the buyer.

"Usually, we will charge down payments from the customer before we purchase the lacking items. Once we get the required item, we will notify the customer and invite him to come and collect his goods and pay the balance." The lady offered her solution.

"That sounds ok. How about the lead time? How many down payments shall I pay?" Xu Yi had no alternative but to accept this proposal.

All of a sudden, the sales lady shot a sincere look at Xu Yi, smiling from the bottom of her heart. She was glad that this big fish had finally taken the bait.

Soon after the saleswoman quoted the price, Qinghua interrupted her and bargained fiercely. The original quotation was 150 gold coins for all seven medicines combined, with 50 gold coins as down payment. Now, with the efforts of Qinghua, the price had quickly dropped to 120 gold coins and 30 gold coins as down payment. Both sides agreed that the lead time should be within two months; otherwise, the down payment should be completely refunded.

Xu Yi was quite satisfied with this deal. Especially, since Qinghua had helped him save 30 gold coins. As agreed, Qinghua would get 10% commission from the 30 gold coins, which were 3 gold coins.

Since the final price was well below the targeted price, Xu Yi was exhilarated. Teacher Zhou once told him that these medicines were too rare to get, however, now he hadn't spent much money, yet, within two months, he would've obtained everything he needed.

The brown haired lady stood there, throwing a reproachable pout at Qinghua. Her happiness of getting this big order was somewhat diluted by Qinghua's bargaining skills. Soon, she showed a wide smile and asked: "My distinguished guest, would you pay in cash or gold cheques? "

"gold cheques? Is there a bank here?" Xu Yi exclaimed with wide-eyes.

Qinghua shot a glance at the bewildered saleswoman, who was also stunned by Xu Yi's mentioning of a bank, and whispered to Xu Yi: "Boss, since you're from the outskirts of Guan'an, you may not know, that we do indeed have banks here in the city. The gold coins are not easy to carry around, especially when the transaction amount reaches thousands, or even millions of gold coins. Therefore, Empire Yue, in alliance with the five most prominent families in Guan'an, have established the Empire Money



House, where you can exchange your coins into cheques. This makes life much more convenient here."

"Ah, I see." Xu Yi nodded, as he quickly sank into meditation. He started to compare his present life and his previous life, as he found some similarities, everything was intertwined. People had to drink water when they were thirsty, eat when they were hungry. No one could get rid of these rudimentary needs, because these were the natural rules of the world. In his previous life, there were banks to exchange money, now they had a money house, which was practically the same thing. How intriguing this was.

Xu Yi rummaged through his pocket and took out a golden disc.

Since Xu Yi looted Junior Zhou's family, he had turned into an overnight millionaire. The Zhou Family had to work in the gold mines for three whole years, to obtain these two golden discs.

The glaring golden disc made both the lady and Qinghua faces freeze like wax portraits – their eyes popped out like a goldfish's, their mouth opened widely like a hippo's, as they harshly gasped for air.

- Dong! -

Qinghua knelt down in front of Xu Yi, as if he was worshipping a god.

Meanwhile, the brown haired lady kept staring at the gleaming disc, as

if some kind of magic power from this disc was taking her soul.

"Hurry up, please. We need to get things settled. Please exchange this golden disc for twenty gold coins, eight pieces of gold cheques worth 100 nominal value [1], as well as 15 pieces of gold cheques worth 10 nominal value. The rest is for the down payment." Xu Yi decided to convert the golden disc into some loose change.

The lady came back to "life" by Xu Yi's loud voice, surprisingly, she didn't take the golden disc and instead, she just ran away in a hurry.

"Boss, you're in such a low profile. But you're actually so rich!" Qinghua crawled up.

Previously, Qinghua thought that Xu Yi was merely an inexperienced pumpkin, who might just be a simple upstart. However, now, seeing the golden disc, he made up his mind to forever follow Xu Yi in the future.

"Calm down. Don't forget, I have another task for you. But look at you now... I'm a little bit worried that you'll screw it up." Xu Yi scolded Qinghua for his prudence.

"I'll do whatever I can to work for you, boss." Qinghua couldn't take his eye off the golden disc, as he hysterically replied to Xu Yi.

In the middle of their conversation, the brown haired saleswoman came back in with an old man, who turned out to be the chief steward – Mr. Wu.

They bowed to each other and soon, Mr. Wu clapped his hands together as a sign to inform the servants to carry in a large tray, with gold cheques and gold coins displayed inside.

"Please count it." Mr. Wu smiled at Xu Yi.

Xu Yi took the tray, and started counting all the gold cheques and gold coins. After a while, he suddenly looked up at Mr. Wu and asked: "Why?"

The total amount was still worth a total of 1,000 gold coins, in other words, they didn't deduct the down payments. Xu Yi was really confused, why didn't they accept his down payment? Or was it perhaps a hint to reject their deal?

## Chapter 34 – Ginseng Baby

“Distinguished guest, since you have shown us the golden disc, you have the exemption rights to any down payment that is less than 100 gold coins. This is the rule of our store. You just need to sign the entrusted Letter of Commitment.” Mr. Wu specified.

“Thank you!” Xu Yi had to admit that money could bring him certain privileges.

“You’re welcome. What else can I do for you, my dear guest?” Mr. Wu bowed to him again.

“My boss needs some heavy weapons and a piece of well-made protective clothing.” Qinghua interrupted him.

For Xu Yi, the main purpose of this trip was to equip himself, before he’d receive the invitation letter from the Black Dragon Palace. Since Xu Yi had been through several fights with opponents from different levels, he began to be aware of the importance of weapons and techniques. Although, at the very beginning of his cultivation, he didn’t believe in weapons and techniques, now things had changed. Considering the limit of time, this was the most expedient resort.

Xu Yi had to find a balance between his offensive and defensive abilities, so he required both offensive weapons and defensive protective clothing. Sometimes, the difference in weapons and techniques would alter the outcome of a fight.

"Mr. Yi (based on Xu Yi's fake name 'Yi Xu'), I won't take the risk of devaluing your nobleness by showing you these mundane items. A timely arrival is better than an early one. In an hour, there'll be an auction, where the selling items are all carefully selected. Trust me, you should take a look there." Mr. Wu recommended Xu Yi to take part in their auction.

"Auction?" Xu Yi pondered, "I'd be glad to be a part of it."

Xu Yi knew the items displayed in auctions were all rare and precious, and he might even encounter some useful weapons or medicines.

Soon, Mr. Wu went out and a young lady with a low-cut dress stepped in, holding a large piece of hooded cloak and a small red plate. She bent over towards Xu Yi, revealing her cleavage.

"My distinguished guest, to ensure the privacy of the transactions as well as the identity of our customers, we provide you with these two items. The cloak is used to cover your face, so that no one at the auction will be able to recognise you. This little red plate is made of some magical material, currently it is blank, correct? However, later, as soon as the auction begins, there will emerge a number on the surface of this plate, which will be your participant number. Even the store will have no clue who won the final bid."

Xu Yi was impressed by their considerate services, it was no wonder that this place was swarmed with customers.

The young lady refilled the teacup and left the room.

Looking around, there were all kinds of fruits and snacks stacked up high on the table, so Xu Yi decided to ask the servants to pack some for him. Xu Yi wanted to share the delicious food with his gluttonous little girl, Autumn. Later, he lied down on the chair and closed his eyes, attempting to get some rest while he was waiting.

Meanwhile, Qinghua was continuously walking in circles, like an upset mouse locked in a barred cage.

"Stop! You're making me dizzy. Why don't you just sit down and have a rest? I still have tasks for you later, which means, you still have the opportunity to make more money."

Xu Yi knew what Qinghua was worried about. Since there was no bargaining allowed at the auction, Qinghua would have no chance to earn extra commissions.

"Come here, take this sword and sell it to this store." Xu Yi took out the sword he had taken from the young lord in black clothing.

Xu Yi's swordsmanship was immature, so he regarded this sword as a useless prop. After all, he believed in the strength of his fists, rather than that of the sword. Plus, the sharpness of this sword was incomparable, which made Xu Yi feel confident in obtaining a high price for it.

Qinghua held the sword and scrutinized it with great care. He knew that this was not a normal item and he was confident that he'd sell it at a justifiable price.

“Believe me, my boss. I will sell it at a high price!” Qinghua took the sword and ran out.

“Mr. Yi, it’s time for the auction. Please follow me.” The young lady said, as she entered the room once more.

Xu Yi put the cloak on and covered his head, before he walked through a secret tunnel; finally, he arrived in a plainly decorated room. There were thirty soft chairs in total, plus a long table here.

All the walls, as well as the furniture, were painted white. Perhaps, the designer was a minimalist, who was worried that the audience would be distracted by colorful pictures and dazzling ornaments.

Xu Yi randomly seated himself in the rear rows. Several minutes later, most of the seats were taken, while all of the participants were dressed in a similar fashion – a hooded cloak.

Suddenly, Xu Yi sensed a strong flow of qi, blending in with the smell of blood. He figured that he must be surrounded by superior cultivators from higher realms. Because, the last time he had this feeling, was when he fought with Shirong.

Xu Yi’s heart bumped rapidly, as he was rather excited to see the items. Surrounded by those experienced cultivators, he became more and more excited. He focused his attention on the long desk, anxiously awaiting for the arrival of the first item.

Soon after, the last two guests had entered from behind and the back

door was closed. Suddenly, the front door opened and an old man in a silver gown emerged, and behind him there were ten bunny girls carefully lined up, each holding a covered item.

The old man delivered a concise but enthusiastic opening speech, before he announced the bidding of the first item.

Upon the long table, a brown woodcarving was displayed. Intriguingly, it was sculptured in the shape of a fat baby - legs, hands and hair were all delicately carved in the wood. It was such an adorable baby.

Xu Yi narrowed his eyes and exclaimed: "Ginseng Baby! [1]"

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[1]: Picture reference for the ginseng baby.

<http://english.cri.cn/12394/2014/08/05/2982s839072.htm>





Local farmers in the northern Chinese province of Hebei are growing ginseng fruit in a mold that will form the likeness of a human baby's face on the produce. Farmers say that the face-shaped fruit will go on sale in markets soon.

## Chapter 35 – Long'er Scalp

"You're right, this is a Ginseng Baby. But, look, it's natural, rather than an artificial piece of art. With 10 centimeters in height, it vividly displays itself in the shape of a fat baby. If it wasn't extracted and it was left in the soil for another 500 years, it'd probably be brought to life." The old man in the billowy silver gown vividly described the Ginseng Baby to the audience.

"As a first-grade medicine, the main function of the Ginseng Baby is divided into two aspects, one for healing, and another for reviving the dead. No matter how severe your injury is, as long as your heart still beats, consuming this Ginseng Baby raw will save your life. Isn't that amazing? You're all experienced cultivators, who will occasionally be invited to a fight and get wounded, this Ginseng Baby will certainly help you out if fate decides that you're to lose a fight. Er... Okay, I bet everyone here has a better knowledge than me on this piece of medicine. I won't show off in front of all of you. Initial bidding price is 500 gold coins and the bid increment is no less than 10 gold coins. Let's start!" The old man rounded his speech up and started the auction for the first item.

Shortly after the old man finished his words, one of the bunny girls held the Ginseng Baby in front of the audience, to allow them to have a closer look.

This was really an eye-opening event for Xu Yi, as he never thought, that in his lifetime he'd see a real Ginseng Baby, which was only supposed to exist in legends.

"680 gold coins, guest No. 24 bid 680, anyone else?"

"700 gold coins!"

"Oh, 700 gold coins, guest No.3, Alright, 700 gold coins, first time!"

"720 gold coins!"

"720 gold coins, guest No.17!"

"800 gold coins! I come from an alchemy family. My name is Qi Ming. This time, I'll use this Ginseng Baby to refine a special pill. As you all know, if you eat the Ginseng Baby, it only serves the purpose of healing, but we have various pills on the market which have the same function. I suggest you guys just let me get this Ginseng Baby."

The crowd burst into an uproar on hearing the name of Qi Ming.

"Elder Qi! He's part of one of the three most prominent alchemy families. I heard that he's capable of refining all kinds of Bigu [1] pills, that are needed in the forged body stage. He really lives up to his reputation as the top pill-maker."

"A Bigu Pill is nothing when compared to his most recent product – a Shen Yuan Pill. Guess what, he plans to use this Ginseng Baby as a raw material for this innovative Shen Yuan Pill."

"I guess some of you might've already known, that that Shen Yuan Pill is a must if you're in the transition period between a forged body and an

ocean of qi. It'll help you awaken the power in your dantian, which is the location where your qi is concentrated. Actually, these kind of pills are easily available in the empire and other prominent families. Indeed, they have since long monopolized the supply of these pills, preventing pariahs, as they call them, from cultivating into higher realms. However, currently, I'm in the middle of my research, and I'm confident I'll succeed in refining this Shen Yuan Pill. As soon as my Shen Yuan Pill goes on the market, you guys will certainly benefit from it, especially those who are stuck in the realm of a forged body." Elder Qi was rather eloquent, passionately persuading the other guests.

Most of the cultivators here were touched by Elder Qi's remarks, they gave up on bidding. No doubt, the Ginseng Baby was eventually bought by Elder Qi at 800 gold coins.

"I really appreciate your understanding and help. I'm here solely for the Ginseng Baby, since I won the bid, there's no reason for me to stay here any longer. I promise that I'll bring the Shen Yuan Pill to this auction room once it's successfully refined." Elder Qi bowed to the rest of the guests and walked away through the backdoor.

Soon, three man got up from their seats and followed behind Elder Qi. They considered the Shen Yuan Pill as a potential investment project and decided to negotiate with Elder Qi on the front end investment issue.

A leap of excitement struck Xu Yi, he could feel his blood pressure surging. The Shen Yuan Pill was extremely tempting for him, so that he could break through the forged body and enter into an ocean of qi. Thankfully, however, his rational mind restrained him from rushing after Elder Qi.

At the same time, in front of the table, the sexy bunny girl held another item in her hands. She then walked in front of the audience to show the second item of this auction. This new item made Xu Yi completely forget his obsession for the magic pill mere seconds ago. He would patiently wait here for something that'd suit him.

Two hours later, 13 items were auctioned, including powerful weapons, magic medicines and even a three-eyed monkey. Sadly, none of them were suitable for Xu Yi.

"The next item: A Long'er's Scalp. According to the historical records, Long'ers existed thousands of years ago. There is a legend about the Long'er, that says that it boasts the blood of dragons and has a fiery nature. Strangely, Long'ers are fond of coolness in daylight and hotness during the night. That's why it inhabited the bottom of a volcano, where it was able to swallow up big chunks of ice and spit out fire. In terms of medical use, the most valued part of a Long'er, is located on its head – the scalp, which is as thin as a cicada's wings, yet at the same time, is so resilient that it's almost impenetrable by swords. Plus, it's resilient to both fire and water. You may not believe me, but it is true that the Long'er will swell its whole body once it becomes infuriated, so the scalp can be easily expanded or shrunk." The old man held a thin piece of the scalp in his hand, which precisely fit into his palm.

Soon, four strong servants went onto the auction stage, and each picked up a corner of the scalp. They jerked the scalp, until it reached such a size that it covered half of the room. All the guests were attentively watching the scalp, without batting their eyes, in case they would lose the chance to witness this magical moment.

Soon, one of the servants took out a sharp sword and stabbed it directly into the scalp. Amazingly, the scalp wasn't broken, there wasn't even so

much as a mark left from this stab.

Soon after, another servant lighted up a bunch of wood and threw the scalp into the burning fire. After quite some time, the scalp was taken out, fully intact, shimmering as brightly as before.

Suddenly, a guest in the corner stood up and bombarded a series of questions about this scalp.

“My apologies. I’ve got a couple of questions. Water-proof as well as fire-proof, impenetrable by sword, yeah, I’m amazed by all those qualities, yet I’m not convinced that this is one of a kind. I suppose most of the guests here plan to use this scalp as protective clothing, right? What if the opponent exerts extreme strength while wielding his sword, I mean, the performers on the stage are ordinary guys whose strength is weak. What if an experienced cultivator held the sword and stabbed at the scalp, will it still be undamaged?”

“What’s more, as cultivators, we’ve to defend ourselves from swords, spears, fists and even kicks. Perfect protective clothing will cushion the power of the attack. I’m wondering, if this scalp has some shock absorbing functions? If not, then it isn’t a perfect item.”

The old man in silver gown stroked his beard and smiled at the questioner: “Good questions! But I’m telling you, that anything auctioned in this room is one in a million. In order to remove your doubts, I will invite some volunteers to help me out. As far as I know, some of our respectful guests here have already stepped into the realm of an ocean of qi. Would anyone offer me a hand?”

"I'll have a try!" A guest in the first row voluntarily stood up.

"Since you've already entered into the realm of an ocean of qi, I guess you'd better take off the hood and let us know who you are. Otherwise, others will be suspicious if you're compelled to do so." The old man said.

"Good idea! Elder Li, you're right. There are only a few cultivators in Guanan who have reached an ocean of qi. Once I take my hood off, you'll all recognise me. Haha." The volunteer unveiled himself, exposing a square face, straight eyebrows and a pair of sparkling eyes.

"Gao Junmo!"

"General Gao!"

"Black Clothing Gao!"

"Seven Sword Gao!"

The crowd exploded into an uproar, it seemed as if they were all rather familiar with the man who stood in front of them.

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[1]: bigu: a popular Taoist practice by refraining from eating grain.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bigu\\_\(avoiding\\_grains\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bigu_(avoiding_grains))

## Chapter 36 - Bidding

All of the nicknames the crowd exclaimed, were for the square-faced man in front of them. He was actually the General of the Security Guard in Guanan, usually he was referred to as "General Gao".

As previously mentioned, the local security department was categorized into five gradations, represented by five colors – gold, purple, black, white and green. General Gao wore black clothing, indicating that he was in the third ranking. So it was no wonder that he was called "Black Clothing Gao".

General Gao cultivated a special technique, the Seven Fatal Sword, which had gotten him the nickname "Seven Sword Gao".

"Would you allow me to be the tester of this item?" General Go bowed to the audience gently, while he made his request.

The crowd responded with a loud applause.

General Gao took out a shiny sword from his waist, ready to stab at the scalp.

"Wait!"

The old man in the robe hurriedly stepped forward: "The Long'er Scalp is a newly-purchased item, so we don't know its limits. I mean, I don't



know how much strength it could possibly bear. General Gao's Seven Fatal Sword is peerless, everyone in Guanan knows the power of his swordsmanship. If the Long'er Scalp tears open under the strength of his Seven Fatal Sword, we'll heavily suffer financially. I, as representative of the Exquisite Pavilion, request General Go to refrain himself from using any techniques, but to merely exert pure strength. If the scalp breaks then, it'll only prove that it doesn't deserve its reputation. If the scalp remains intact, we'll continue the auction."

Everyone knew the power of the Seven Fatal Sword, so there was no naysayer. After all, the Long'er Scalp was not from heaven, it was discovered in this mortal world, where everything had its limitations.

Xu Yi sat on his seat, leaning forward. Once again, he felt that techniques played an irreplaceable role in the process of cultivation. General Gao's Seven Fatal Sword was a striking example.

As required, General Gao stabbed his sword at the scalp and with a thud, the tip of the sword pressed against the surface, but it couldn't actually penetrate the scalp. Even with General Gao's strength, he failed to penetrate the sword into the scalp.

- hua! -

The audience cried out with expressions full of disbelief and their wide open mouths were big enough to tuck an egg in. General Gu was a cultivator who had long entered the realm of an ocean of qi, a height only very few could ever reach. Out of the audience's expectations, he had actually failed to tear a mere piece of scalp! Or more accurately, they were amazed at the defensive ability of the Long'er Scalp.

Everyone was convinced that the Long'er Scalp was perfect material to make protective clothing of, which would surely be an extra life insurance. Everyone was allured by this life-saving function. Xu Yi gripped his fist, determined to outbid anyone in this room and buy the Long'er Scalp, which he could use in his fight against the Black Dragon Palace.

Looking ahead, Xu Yi found that General Gao had spread the scalp on a piece of wood - Jinsi Nanmu. It seemed that another test was going on. General Gao let out a horrible roar before he threw his fist on the scalp-covered wood. With a thud, the wood was split into two sections, while the scalp fell on the floor, not taking any kind of damage.

- Ooooooh! -

Clapping and cheering sounds exploded in the auction room, as everyone was excited.

Due to the powerful soul and its hypersensitivity, Xu Yi was able to observe that the strength exerted by General Gao, was several times stronger than Elder Feng's Tranquil Fist. More surprisingly, the scalp was intact against the impact of such a strong flow of strength. Plus, the piece of wood made of Jinsi Nanmu was also something worth mentioning, it broke into two pieces, rather than it being reduced into powder. Jinsi Nanmu was also famous for its rare quality – as hard as a diamond, which made it the most luxurious material for making furniture, only those families who had exceedingly deep pockets could afford it.

In the peak state of a forged body, Xu Yi possessed ox-like skin and iron-like bones. His body was absolutely harder than the piece of Jinsi

Nanmu, which broke into two sections. Xu Yi calculated, that if he was hit by the attack from General Gao and he wore the Long'er Scalp protective clothing, that he might only end up with a couple of bruises.

The impenetrable and shock absorption function made the Long'er Scalp a popular item. All of the remaining attendants to this auctions felt their fingers itch, as they planned on obtaining this item. The man in the silver gown threw a wicked smile at the audience, as he predicted that the final bidding price would be high.

"All the tests and demonstrations of this item are over, now let the bidding commence. The starting price is 500 gold coins and the price increment should be no less than 50 gold coins." The old man announced the start of the bid for the Long'er Scalp.

"500 gold coins!"

"550 gold coins!"

"700 gold coins!"

"....."

The bidding didn't seem to stop any time soon, as the price had already spiraled to 1,000 gold coins!

Protective clothing that was capable of defending against opponents

who had entered the realm of an ocean of qi, this was definitely a dream-come-true item for most of the guests – those in the stage of a forged body.

However, as the bidding reached 1,000 gold coins, the bidding seemed to gradually calm down.

For one thing, the Long'er Scalp did have its limits in value, it was far from priceless. Previously, for example, the Refined Gold Sword, which could cut off 10 pieces of armors piled together, ended up being sold for merely 500 gold coins.

For the other, most bidders were in the forged body stage, which meant, they were financially restrained from buying this item for such a high price. Plus, with 1,000 gold coins, there were a variety of other defensive items they could choose from. Probably, with this amount of money, they could buy two or three comparatively ordinary weapons.

But there were exceptions, three bidders continued to compete with each other.

"1050 gold coins!" No. 7 growled.

"1100 gold coins!" General Gao exclaimed. He had tested the quality of this item and he was sure, even if he exerted the full power of his Seven Fetal Sword, the scalp wouldn't break under the pressure. He knew he wouldn't stumble upon another item like this one, so he was determined to tuck this scalp into his own pocket as soon as possible.

“1150 gold coins!” No.29 shouted, with a slight sneer.

Xu Yi looked around and found that this No.29 was only several seats away from him. He could sense the strong flow of qi that was emanated from this man, which meant that he had most likely already entered the realm of an ocean of qi. Xu Yi remembered that this man had already bought three other items, which had cost him almost 4,000 gold coins!

“The Long’er Scalp was not all-powerful. An ordinary cassock from Refined Gold Palace was less than 2,000 gold coins. It makes no sense that you keep bidding and let me lose face. Why not just stop here, and let me get it.” No.29 added after bidding his price.

“You lose face? Excuse me, who the hell do you think you are? This is an auction, whoever bids the highest price gets the Long’er Scalp. I’m afraid you don’t even know the rules here.” No.7 replied coldly.

“Who the hell am I? Honestly, no one in Guanan dares to speak to me like this.” No.29 took off his cloak and exposed a stout build.

“Elder Shui!”

“Is he... From... One of the four prominent families – The Shui Family?”

“You’re right! He is Elder Shui, who has already entered the realm of an ocean of qi.”

The crowd, once again, burst out into a fierce discussion.

At the same time, Elder Shui glanced at General Gao, "General, my old friend. Would you please just give up and let me get the Long'er Scalp?"

General Gao frowned, "Er... Okay. But do remember, the Shui Family owes me a favor because of this." He neatly finished his remarks and strode away.

## Chapter 37 – Scramble

“No.7, excuse me for my rudeness. Since I have no idea who you are, let me just call you No.7. I hope you don’t mind. Given the social status of my Shui Family, would you please just stop here so that I can save my face.” Elder Shui fixed his pale eyes on No.7.

“Elder... Elder Shui, I’m actually one of the younger generation of the Feng Family. So I will...I will give up. Look, the Shui Family and Feng Family are in the same alliance, I will not be so foolish as to take this Long’er scalp at the cost of our family’s friendship.” No.7 shivered a little bit due to the coercive stare of Elder Shui.

“Haha, you’re such a coward! Alright, 1150 gold coins. Elder Li, just drop that damn hammer and call it the final bid.” Elder Shui said with contempt.

“1150 gold coin, once, and 1150 twice....”

When the old man in the silver gown, named Elder Li, was just about to land the last drop of the hammer, someone from the rear row raised his hands and exclaimed: “1200 gold coins!”

The crowd all jerked their heads towards this bold challenger. Without a doubt, this man was Xu Yi.

Xu Yi was determined to get this Long’er scalp at any cost. Because this was the thing he longed for badly, which would help him out in his

upcoming fierce fight.

Even though the rest of the people were all frightened by Elder Shui's social status, as well as his intimidating remarks, Xu Yi didn't care much about all of this. The only thing he cared for, was how to protect himself in the upcoming fight with the Black Dragon Palace.

"How dare you!" Flames of anger burned brightly in Elder Shui's eyes, as he ferociously stared at Xu Yi.

All of the participants could sense that something ominous was about to happen, they curled up in their seats, quivering. Surprisingly, Xu Yi remained firmly seated and even craned his head over the crowd, staring straight back at Elder Shui.

"Elder Shui, as a senior, you should set a good example for us. Now, look at you, you've broken the rules of fairness of this auction. Shame on you!"

The crowd was totally dumbfounded by Xu Yi's boldness. No one had ever spoken to Elder Shui in such a spiteful way.

As one of the leading families in Guanan, the Shui Family had maintained its social status for hundreds of years. Even the Magistrate of the Guanan Government would go and celebrate the birthday of Elder Shui.

Apart from his family background, Elder Shui's individual achievement – entering into the middle state of an ocean of qi, was another reason why



he was a revered elder in Guanan.

Hearing Xu Yi's unfriendly remarks, Elder Shui felt like it was completely surreal. Never in his lifetime had he encountered such a straightforward person, who just blurted out what was on his mind.

"You despicable creature! Who are you? I'll show you how to be polite to your elders!" Elder Shui wrinkled his nose, while he spat these words out.

"Elder Li, I have made a bid of 1200 gold coins, if no one follows, I guess I'm the owner of this Long'er Scalp." Disregarding Elder Shui's fury, Xu Yi turned back to Elder Li.

Xu Yi was crystal clear that, despite the influence of the Shui Family, Elder Shui would not risk arousing public wrath on this matter. After all, the Exquisite Pavilion was patronized by various kinds of guests, including those in higher realms than Elder Shui.

"Elder Shui, this is an auction, we have to proceed as per the procedure. No.23 has bid for 1,200 gold coins, ok, 1,200 gold coins, once; 1,200 gold coins, twice..." Elder Li interrupted. He despised Elder Shui, or anyone else who publicly deterred the process of bidding and asked for privileges.

When Qi Ming stood up and revealed his identity on purpose, it was tolerable for Elder Li, because Qi Ming promised that he would sell the Shen Yuan Pill to the Exquisite Pavilion for auction.

Nevertheless, Elder Li was annoyed by Elder Shui's browbeating tactics.

Now, since Xu Yi had taken the lead, he seized this opportunity to embarrass Elder Shui.

"1,300 gold coins!" Elder Shui's glaring eyes didn't move away from Xu Yi for even a second, as he called out a new bid.

Despite the prominence of the Shui Family, Elder Shui wouldn't be imprudent and force Elder Li to sell the Long'er Scalp to him. In other words, he had to respect the standard procedures of the auction.

"1,350 gold coins!" Xu Yi shouted, without any delay.

"1,400 gold coins!" With the twitching of his eyelids, Elder Shui continued, "No.23, if you stop here, you'll still be my friend. Let bygones be bygones, ok?"

Everyone was shocked by Elder Shui's sudden change in attitude; they couldn't believe their ears, that these soft and nice words were actually coming from Elder Shui's mouth. He was such a 'diehard', how could it be possible that he would make such a compromise.

Meanwhile, some guests started to wonder who the hell this No.23 was, was he a reckless newcomer or a revered old cultivator? They were extremely curious about Xu Yi.

At the same time, Xu Yi pondered for a second, before he confidently called out: "1,450 gold coins!" He was sure that Elder Shui must've run out of money, due to his extravagant spending on the previous three items.

"1,500 gold coins! No.23, Why are you being so difficult?!" Elder Shui was on the verge of losing his mind.

Actually, Xu Yi got half of the picture right – Elder Shui didn't have much of his budget left for the Long'er Scalp, but he still had some reserves.

Originally, Elder Shui had brought 10,000 gold coins, later, 4,000 of those gold coins were spent on the previous three auctioned items. Now, he was left with only 6,000 gold coins, with which he planned to buy the most-valued item in this auction. If he spent too much on the Long'er Scalp, he wouldn't be able to buy the planned item. It was the consequence of his shopping spree at the beginning of the auction, that had turned the situation off the planned track.

Now, that Xu Yi kept on bidding, Elder Shui wasn't sure at what price he'd be able to outbid this bastard. Plus, there were rules in the Exquisite Pavilion, anything auctioned should be paid instantly, no delay was allowed. Thus, it'd be too late for him to go back home and refill his pocket.

Elder Shui's main purpose of his trip to the Exquisite Pavilion, was to obtain the most-valued item, which had yet to be shown. He began to regret randomly buying the previous three items. As he hated to lose this precious Long'er Scalp.

Thirty years ago, Elder Shui and his uncle had encountered a real Long'er in an ancient volcanic cluster. This creature was so unique, that up until now, Elder Shui could vividly remember what had happened at that

time.

The Long'er looked like a hybrid of a dragon and a crocodile, or more exactly, it had a dragon's head and a crocodile's body. Elder Shui's uncle was in the realm of the liquidation of the qi; however, he could only obtain a draw in his fight against the Long'er. When he had slammed his fist on the head of the Long'er, he felt his efforts to be almost in vain, as there wasn't even so much as a mark left on its head.

The terrifying defensive ability of the Long'er had haunted Elder Shui ever since. Now, the Long'er Scalp was at his fingertips and there was almost no reason for him to quit scrambling for this rare item.

## Chapter 38 – The Most-Valued Item

Elder Shui was the only one in the auction room that had witnessed the terrifying defensive ability of a Long'er in action, so he had thought out a deterrent tactic by revealing his true identity. Since the rest of the competitors were all intimidated, like turtles hiding in their shells, Elder Shui was confident in successfully winning the bid for this Long'er Scalp at a lower price. However, out of his expectation, Xu Yi stuck his head out, having no intention to give up on this item.

However, 1,500 gold coins was truly the maximum Elder Shui wished to offer, otherwise, he would miss the forest for the tree [1]. After all, the most-valued item was not yet auctioned. Elder Shui noticed that some guests in the corner had never bid for a single item, ever since the start of this auction; they must be waiting for this final and most-valued item. Elder Shui was pondering on whether his remaining money was enough to win the final bid for that item, where more competitors would be looking to join in the bidding process.

Elder Shui kept scratching his head, expecting for Xu Yi to finally follow behind the other guests under the threat of his Shui Family.

"1,800 gold coins!" A crisp sound suddenly broke the silence; everyone felt like they were hit by a bolt of lightning. Xu Yi uncharacteristically added 300 gold coins, in an attempt to scare off Elder Shui, who he believed was merely a spent bullet at this point. Infact, Xu Yi was also fatigued by this long and dull competition, he would actually like to end it as soon as possible.

However, his final bid of 1,800 gold coins wasn't a random bid, this was

actually the most Xu Yi could offer. The total amount of money in his pocket was 2,000 gold coins, and he wished to reserve 200 gold coins for making the protective clothing by using the Long'er Scalp, which was obviously only a material and not yet a usable defensive item.

Elder Shui threw a vicious glance at Xu Yi, before he slowly closed his eyes, unwilling to witness what would happen next.

The sharp increase of 300 gold coins had successfully deterred Elder Shui from any further bidding. Elder Shui had to make this difficult decision, even though he greatly treasured the Long'er Scalp, perhaps even more than Xu Yi did, he still had to have enough funds left to win the bid for the most-valued item.

"1,800 gold coins, once! 1,800 gold coins twice, 1,800 gold coins, thrice! Deal! On behalf of the Exquisite Pavilion, I announce that our dear guest, No.23 has officially won the bid for the Long'er Scalp for 1,800 gold coins. Congratulations!" With the sound of the drumming hammer, Elder Li delightfully exclaimed.

Nevertheless, Xu Yi wasn't all that excited. Instead, he looked rather gloomy.

Without these 1,800 gold coins, he'd be poor once again. Lately he had really been living the life of a rollercoaster, quickly rushing through the highs and lows. Before, he had gained these great fortunes in the blink of an eye, almost effortlessly. However, now, he lost these fortunes, so quickly that he wasn't even able to mentally prepare himself to be poor again.

"Damn, 1,800 gold coins are enough for me to comfortably enjoy the rest of my life. Well... Well, anyway, the Long'er Scalp will probably save my life, which is priceless." Xu Yi mumbled to himself, trying to find a proper way to console himself on the loss of these 1,800 gold coins.

"Our distinguished guests, I'm honored to introduce to you our last, but most-valued item of this auction. As far as I know, some of you have come here simply for this item. I have seen numerous precious items in this auction room, but none of them has ever been as breath-taking as this one. Infact, my first glance at this stunning item, reminded me of my first date with my beautiful girlfriend. It was so gorgeous and delicate, that it'll definitely quicken your heartbeats. Trust me; this item is truly worthy of being the final item at our auction." Elder Li passionately elaborated on the last item,

As Elder Li took off the drapery that covered the item, a round and white iron ball exposed itself.

- Boom! -

The item shown blew Xu Yi's mind, as he couldn't help himself but quiver out of sheer surprise.

The most-valued item of the Exquisite Pavilion was actually an iron ball, which was strikingly similar to the one that he had snatched away from the man in black clothing. The only discrepancy was, the ball on display was several centimeters smaller in its diameter.

The iron ball was regarded as the most-valued item in this auction, which was telling evidence that this item was extremely scarce on the

market. Extreme joy suddenly overtook Xu Yi, as he realised he already owned another one.

"Is that the refined iron?!"

"Definitely! Look at the color, as white as snow and as transparent as jade, wow, it must be the legendary refined iron!"

"If it is really the refined iron, it should be priceless. I cannot figure out why the original owner would sell such a treasure?"

"....."

The appearance of the iron ball brought this auction to its climax, as waves of exclamations quickly filled the air.

"Distinguished guests, with your discerning eyes, you have correctly identified this item. Yes! It is the well-known, but rarely-seen, refined iron. Since some of you might be interested in its origin, I'll take the liberty to explain this to all of you. As its name suggests, it is made of refined iron - the best quality of iron. According to the 'Exotic Matter Records', the refined iron isn't even matter of this mortal world, as it dropped out of the sky ages ago. By absorbing the essence of the natural energy, including the sun's and moon's, the exotic iron was gradually refined in a more delicate shape, as it became white and transparent. More surprisingly, when the natural energy has amounted to a certain degree, the refined iron would even give life to a 'spirit of the refined iron', which is said to be as sensible as a human's."



"Subsequently, the refined iron possesses some kind of magic. If you put it into your palm, you can change it into various shapes, depending on the strength you use. Isn't that amazing? Have you ever heard of the rumor that if this refined iron fell into the hands of the most talented cultivator, it would change into whatever shapes it could possibly be." Elder Li finished his lengthy speech and put the iron ball into his palm.

"Now, everyone, watch carefully..." Before Elder Li had finished his words, the refined iron had already changed into several shapes.

"No more testing, we all know how magical this item is. Let's just start bidding!" Someone stood up and urged.

"Wait a minute... If the refined iron just transforms itself into various shapes, it is no different from a simple toy. Please let us know how it can be used during a fight?" Xu Yi opposed, as he was eager to learn more about this refined iron.

As the host of this auction, Elder Li was more than happy to elaborate on the merits of the refined iron. He was sure, that spot testing was the most convincing way to lure them in and hit a high price.

"Good question. Facts speak louder than words. Distinguished guest, please watch closely."

Elder Li put the refined iron into his palm and a shiny sword instantly emerged. He then slashed the sword in all directions, leaving curves of silver light flickering in the air.

Elder Li's performance instantly received a burst of applause from the guests.

However, Xu Yi was slightly disappointed, as he was hoping for something more magical. When he was attacked by the man in black clothing, his body was pierced through by the refined iron (in the shape of numerous needles). As a cultivator in the peak state of a forged body, however, the needles had failed to poke into his bones, which were as hard as iron.

Based on this information, Xu Yi calculated that this refined iron would be a fatal weapon only if the opponent was well below the peak state of a forged body. For those beyond, for instance, cultivators in the realm of an ocean of qi, the refined iron wouldn't pose much of a threat.

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[1]: Can't see/Miss the forest for the trees: An expression used for someone who's too involved with the small details, making him forget the big picture.

## Chapter 39 - Priceless

"Once the refined iron takes the form of a sword, it'll be able to greatly assist you in battle. This is, of course, just one of the many magical functions of this item. Dear guests, have you ever heard of the Deity Sword, owned by the one and only Feng Xifeng, better known as the Master of Swordsmanship, who is also one of the three Wu Kings of Empire Yue. His famous Deity Sword is actually made from refined iron!" Elder Li said glibly after his performance.

"What? Do you mean the legendary Deity Sword? The sword which bright scarlet red light can be seen piercing through the sky from fourteen prefectures away?! Is it really made of refined iron? I heard that its previous master, Master Zeng Yijian, had even cut the peak of a mountain with the Deity Sword, which was obviously quite incredible!"

"The Deity Sword is undeniably stunning with regards to its sharpness. Mr. Li, I still have a question lingering in my mind. As far as I know, the color of the Deity Sword is scarlet red, almost resembling the color of the setting sun. Now, look, the refined iron displayed here is white. How do you explain that?"

Everyone was left bewildered, after this question was asked.

Elder Li beat the silver hammer to regain everyone's attention, before he solemnly replied: "The Exquisite Pavilion boasts a history of 200 years in this line of business. In these 200 years we've never deceived our customers with fake items and we never will. I'm afraid, my dear guest, that you can't quite see the whole picture of this item. I've been informed

that fifty years ago, before Feng Xifeng was honored as the Master of Swordsmanship, his Deity Sword used to actually be white. The sword didn't change its color until twenty years later, when it demonstrated a pale red color. And only at the time when his skill in swordsmanship gradually gained fame, oh, that was probably about ten years ago, did the sword turn into its well known scarlet red color. Some of you may wonder if Master Feng changed between three different-colored swords over these years. Is this true?"

"Is the sword capable of upgrading itself at certain stages? The sword made of refined iron has the exceptional function to change its color as a sign of an upgrade!" Xu Yi suddenly blurted out.

Elder Li slightly nodded his head, full of complacency.

Upon hearing this mind-boggling function, the guests couldn't restrain their excitement any more, as some of the seats were even cracked because of the impact of qi exerted from their overjoyed emotion.

A weapon with self-upgrading function was by no means a normal item, especially for those cultivators who almost took weapons in as their lovers.

Most of the time, when a cultivator stepped into a higher realm, he had to reluctantly change his original weapon for a new one, one that could match his master's new abilities. After all, original weapons aren't able to upgrade their strength alongside their master, so to have a weapon that is able to evolve alongside its master.. This was like a dream come true for most cultivators.

On one side, they attached great personal emotions to their weapons, which accompanied them through both the good and the bad times. On the other side, it took quite some time to get familiar with a new weapon. As far as efficiency was taken into consideration, the constant change of your weapon was obviously not a favored choice.

Now, that weapons made of refined iron could overcome the weakness of ordinary weapons, it was, of course, greatly tempting all of the present cultivators.

Moreover, the well-known Deity Sword cemented their confidence in the quality of the refined iron. The guests definitely deeply longed for a weapon of this kind.

As for Xu Yi, he considered it a double blessing to possess both the Long'er Scalp and the refined iron. However, he was still unclear about one thing.

"My apology, I still have one more question. As we all know, weapons are of extreme importance to cultivators, why would anyone sell such a peerless weapon material at an auction?"

For the majority of the guests in this auction room, they were hysterically thrilled when the item, that once only existed in legends, suddenly emerged at this auction.

Xu Yi didn't wish to dampen anyone's passion by raising such a question; however, he simply couldn't stand the annoying puzzlement, that was brooding in his head, anymore. Where other auctioned items, such as the Long'er Scalp (which could be found anew as long as the

Long'er didn't go extinct), could be obtained again relatively easily, this refined iron was an irreplaceable material, one that could only be found by sheer luck.

Even though it was almost common knowledge for cultivators that the Deity Sword was made of refined iron, almost no one had had the luck of actually seeing this material with their own two eyes. Anyone who held such a legendary item wouldn't be willing to sell this priceless material to others, unless there were some nasty secrets involved.

"My distinguished guest, thank you for your excellent question. The answer is quite simple actually, because the original owner wasn't able to forge the refined iron into a proper weapon for himself. However, I'm not sure of the detailed reason for this, it could be the lack of forging techniques, or perhaps because the owner isn't accomplished enough as a cultivator. Anyway, the owner eventually made his decision to exchange this item for money, rather than locking it up in some safe. Therefore, please allow me to remind you guys, this item isn't suitable for just anyone; you'd better give it a second thought before bidding. Don't blindly follow others." Elder Li replied in an even tone, without showing any trace of surprise or anger.

The astute response of Elder Li took advantage of this hard question and also provoked more people into bidding, as no one would be willing to admit that they weren't an excellent cultivator, especially for those who had already surpassed the realm of a forged body.

The shock tactic immediately took effect, as everyone was lit up. They stopped thinking of how arduous it could be to forge this material; instead, they began to evaluate their own abilities as a cultivator and compare themselves with the original owner. Undoubtedly, almost everyone concluded that they were better owners for the refined iron.

Elder Li observed the reactions of the guests, and only cut in when he felt that the time was just right. He announced the starting price of 2,000 gold coins and, as soon as he did, the room quickly filled with raucous screams, like noisy buoyant bubbles in a pot filled with boiling water.

Judging from the furious and greedy expression on the guests' faces, Xu Yi speculated that the starting price could probably double.

"5,000 GOLD COINS!" Elder Shui immediately tried his best to shout down his opponents.

The moment Elder Shui was about to speak some intimidating words, he was interrupted by another bidder, shouting with an even higher price. Within several minutes, the bidding price had already reached 6,000 gold coins.

"I will exchange it with a Shen Yuan Pill, who else will compete with me?" Elder Shui said as he suddenly raised his hand, showing a glittering gold pill.

The crowd suddenly turned silent, as everyone's attention was directed at the pill, showing adoration in their eyes. Suddenly, with a crisp sound of the hammer, the bloody bidding competition finally came to an end, as Elder Shui became the new owner of the refined iron.

A few minutes later, Xu Yi walked through the long tunnel and went back to the VIP room, while he was still intoxicated by the excitement that was brought to him by the auction.

A Shen Yuan Pill! It was the magical pill for cultivators in the peak state of a forged body.

In the transitional phase between a forged body and an ocean of qi, it required all of your strength to be turned into genuine qi, which would be invincible. But the premise was, that the dantian in your body had to be activated, so as to give the qi a place to settle down in.

The Shen Yuan Pill's main function was exactly this, to activate your dantian!

Previously, Elder Qi had bought the Ginseng Baby to refine a Shen Yuan Pill, which had already stirred up an uproar in the auction room.

When Elder Shui raised an actual Shen Yuan Pill, Xu Yi had to fully restrain himself from blurting out: "I'll change it with you."

Anyway, his trip to the Exquisite Pavilion was quite fruitful, even though there was still a trace of unhappiness reflected in Xu Yi's expression.

Suddenly a familiar voice could be heard, "Boss, I've been waiting here for you ever since you left. How was the auction, did you get anything?" Qinghua said, as he popped out.

Xu Yi stood there absent-minded, as if he didn't even notice Qinghua.



## Chapter 40 – Bloodcursed Treaty

“Nothing much. You know, most of the guests there were from affluent families, I’m nothing compared to them. Oh right, how about my sword, did anyone buy it?” Xu Yi replied.

“Yes! I have sold the sword for 150 gold coins. I never expected that this sword was made of aged iron. Previously, that old guy, er... I mean, the one that wished to buy it, only accepted a deal for 100 gold coins. However, after I had touted the sword in the main hall, that guy was afraid someone else would take it, so he reluctantly paid me 150 gold coins. Honestly, this price was the ceiling price.” Qinghua replied in a sharp voice, as he was enraptured.

Soon, he took out six gold cheques – one of them was worth 100 gold coins and five of them were worth 10 gold coins each. At the same time, he also gave Xu Yi a transaction note, which was the evidence of the completed deal.

“Well done, my friend. You deserve it!” Xu Yi didn’t even count it before he hastily tucked a cheque worth 10 gold coins into Qinghua’s hands.

“A million thanks! Boss, you are the most generous customer I’ve ever met ever since I took this occupation.” Qinghua said, as he was rejoicing his good fortune.

“You deserve it. Ok, I have to go now. See you later.” Xu Yi felt that Qinghua was a very reliable guide. Perhaps he was a little bit greedy, but he was far from being evil.

"Wait a moment. Boss, don't you require any heavy weapons?" Qinghua slyly asked Xu Yi.

"After seeing so many precious items in the auction room, I'm afraid I'm not interested in any ordinary items." Xu Yi coldly replied.

Actually, Xu Yi was financially restrained after he had invested the majority of his money on the Long'er Scalp. Adding the 150 gold coins for selling the sword, the total amount of money left in his pocket was approximately 350 gold coins, which was supposed to be reserved for the making of his protective clothing.

Since Xu Yi had participated in the auction, it had certainly opened his horizon. He understood that, with only 350 gold coins, he couldn't buy any high-quality heavy weapons.

As soon as Xu Yi stepped forward, Qinghua followed closely.

"What do you want from me? The deal is over, can't you see? Fuck off!" Xu Yi raised his straight eyebrows, as he was slightly annoyed by Qinghua's excessive enthusiasm.

Qinghua embarrassingly explained: "Boss, I propose that we form a long-term employment relationship. It won't cost you much, say, 20 gold coins on a monthly base, no...15 gold coins!"

Indeed, being a guide wasn't a decent occupation. for Qinghua, for

example, it only barely made ends meet. Sometimes, he wouldn't even find any customers for days, so life was quite hard for him. Today, however, he met such a generous customer, he definitely wouldn't just let go of this golden opportunity.

Qinghua's annual earning was merely 60 to 70 gold coins, so it was fair to categorize him in the grass-root class. In Eastern City, living expenses were costly. Plus, he was addicted to gambling, which is where most of his salary ended up.

"No, I can't afford to employ a long-term guide!" Xu Yi immediately declined the offer.

For Xu Yi, it made no sense to hire a long-term guide. He was not a profiteer, who would shuttle back and forth the street all day long. There was no job to offer Qinghua, except as a housekeeper.

"Boss, I project that one day you will be an earthshaking hero and you need a lackey to assist you in that process. If you hire me, you don't have to purchase these things yourself; I will do it for you. Of course, you may doubt my credibility to do this job, for instance, what if I steal your money and flee. Don't worry! I will sign the Bloodcursed Treaty with you, which serves as a guarantee for my loyalty. Er...I can do almost anything, like purchasing medicines, spying on your enemies' situation, gathering information and more! Please, rest assured! I will never betray you under the restriction of the Bloodcursed Treaty." Qinghua sophisticatedly marketed himself.

"What is the Bloodcursed Treaty?" Xu Yi had never heard of such a thing. Actually, Xu Yi was a little bit tempted by the enemy spying and information gathering skills that Qinghua could offer, so he inquired the

details.

“The Bloodcursed Treaty is based on a mutual-oath between the two parties. A drop of blood is required from each side to activate the curse, if any party betrays what is stipulated in the treaty, he or she will be cursed and find an early demise.” Qinghua rummaged through his pocket and took out a piece of red paper and a piece of a transaction note.

Xu Yi guessed that this red piece of paper must be the Bloodcursed Treaty. As for the transaction note that Qinghua showed, it was most likely meant as circumstantial evidence for the authenticity of the Blood Cursed Treaty.

Indeed, Qinghua had bought this treaty from the Exquisite Pavilion soon after he had sold the sword.

Touched by Qinghua’s sincerity, Xu Yi found it hard to decline. He kept walking forward, pondering on the pros and cons of this deal. Eventually, he walked on a bridge and looked far into the distance. Here, he found two candidates who were fighting with each other in the big arena they had passed before. The flag had been changed from white to black [1], and the amount of spectators had more than doubled since the previous fight.

Looking at the fierce battle, Xu Yi instantly made his mind up and decided to hire Qinghua. He had so many things to prepare for before his fight with the Black Dragon Palace, which left him with very limited time for cultivation. Now, Qinghua was the best choice from him to outsource some trivial errands.

"Ok, Qinghua, I'm glad to have you working for me!" Xu Yi confirmed to Qinghua.

With only 350 gold coins in his pocket, Xu Yi felt that he was extremely poor. Considering the cost of making the protective clothing and the medicines he had ordered from the Exquisite Pavilions, he was worried that he wouldn't be able to afford all of it anymore.

Moreover, after realising the magic of the refined iron, he decided to forge a piece of weapon out of it, which would probably also cost him a lot.

The money he had stolen from Junior Zhou's family was almost used up. He had to think of new ways to earn money. As he knew, either in his previous life or this one, money acted as the lubricator that propelled things to go smoothly.

Therefore, Xu Yi planned to earn some quick money in Guanan through gambling.

Xu Yi decided to gamble under the name of Qinghua, in other words, he would use Qinghua as his puppet, reducing the risk of revealing his true identity.

Xu Yi and Qinghua further negotiated on the terms of the treaty. Soon after, they finalised the details. Qinghua invited Xu Yi to his house, where they both recited an oath and offered a drop of blood from their index finger.

Qinghua’s oath encompassed the duration of the employment, how he would be loyal to the employer through and through, even after the treaty had expired. He was bound by this oath to not reveal any information about his employer during, and after, their cooperation.

Meanwhile, Xu Yi was also restricted by this treaty, he vowed to pay Qinghua the correct amount and at the agreed time. No breach was allowed from either side.

Soon after the oath process, Xu Yi focused all of his strength on his index finger, where extremely thick blood gradually oozed out until it formed into a drop. When the two drops of blood met with each other, the Blood Cursed Treaty set itself on fire, sending out blood-colored rays.

After this ceremony, Xu Yi told Qinghua his current address and bid him farewell.

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[1]: Quick reminder: Black was for those at the top state of a forged body. Purple - Black - White - Green : Peak state - Top state - Middle state - Early state

## Chapter 41 - Evil Intruders

His house was made of red bricks and grey tiles, surrounded by flourishing trees and flowers. In the courtyard, the simple yet elegant scenery was rather soothing and peaceful.

Stepping into the courtyard, Xu Yi saw that Autumn held Elder Mu in one arm, as she was walking out of the house.

Elder Mu looked healthier after he had received his medicines. At least, he could falter around the house.

"Uncle, where have you been?" Autumn screamed.

Xu Yi stepped forward, trying to rub Autumn's chubby face: "Look at you, you seem so sleepy. Oh, poor Autumn, you've got such large bags under your eyes. Take these snacks, I bet you'll love them. Afterwards... Go back to bed! I'll take care of grandpa."

Xu Yi gave Autumn the box of snacks, which he had taken from the Exquisite Pavilion.

The diversified and delicate snacks dazzled Autumn, as a big smile emerged on her face while she grabbed onto one of Xu Yi's legs.

"I love you, Uncle Xu." Autumn said as she showed two large puppy eyes. This expression immediately softened Xu Yi's heart. She then

returned to her bedroom, while closely embracing the box.

"She will be spoiled!" Elder Mu smiled at Xu Yi, before he continued: "Sorry to trouble you."

"Elder Mu, it isn't even worth mentioning. Let me help you walk to the courtyard, so you may enjoy the sun for a while." Xu Yi replied.

The weather in August changed from time to time - in the morning, it was cold and cloudy, whereas now, in the afternoon, the sun shone brightly from high up in the sky.

The courtyard was a perfect place to enjoy a book, especially during these warm and sunny days. Lying down on a cotton-padded mattress, Xu Yi would always sit in the shadow, so that he may avoid the dazzling sunlight. This way he could enjoy the weather and read a book all at the same time. But currently, he was with Elder Mu, who was already greatly recovered from his severe injuries, due to the expensive restorative medicines. Xu Yi tried to amuse Elder Mu, so he brought out a second stool and sat beside him.

Like most elders, Elder Mu was fond of telling stories, especially ones that had taken place in the vicinity of the Dragon Beard River. Xu Yi attentively listened to Elder Mu's vivid narratives.

Occasionally, they would even exchange ideas on certain events. They were having a cheerful conversation despite the large age difference.



In the middle of their conversation, Autumn walked back out, as she was holding a plate filled with snacks.

“Story time, story time! Grandpa, Uncle, let’s start competing to see who is the best storyteller. I will be the referee. Whoever wins will be rewarded with one delicacy from this plate.” Autumn grinned at them, holding the plate high up in the air.

Suddenly, Xu Yi stretched his arms out, reaching for Autumn and embraced her in his arms. He loved Autumn’s bowl cut, so he playfully rubbed her hair into a mess. Autumn, however, quickly retorted by slamming her head against Xu Yi’s belly, which was her way of revenge.

In order to not spoil Autumn’s hyper enthusiasm, Xu Yi patiently told her a story named ‘The Princess and the Pea’. Autumn was so absorbed in this story that she quietly stared into the distance, winking her delicate eyelashes like an adorable doll.

- Clap! Clap! -

Suddenly, a harmonious burst of footsteps made an abrupt end to the story. Xu Yi jerked his head towards the doorway and arched his eyebrows.

“Elder Mu, a good show is about to start! Would you watch from inside your room or stay right here, where you are?” Xu Yi hinted at Elder Mu.

“I will stay right here, however, I’m afraid my poor hearing will dilute my happiness, while enjoying this show.” Elder Mu replied with an undaunted

voices. He had a heroic spirit, even though he was simply one of the million ordinary grass-roots.

All of a sudden, a group of armed soldiers poured into the gate, and quickly aligned themselves into two lines. It only took a couple of minutes for the intruders to besiege the house. The swords were all pulled out and bows were in an arched position, ready to shoot. Death was in the air, in broad daylight!

However, Xu Yi didn't seem intimidated at all, at least he pretended to be relaxed. He tapped Autumn's head with loving kindness and warned her softly: "Sit steady, and close your eyes if you're afraid."

The little girl raised her eyebrows: "I'm not afraid of those bad people, because you're here to protect us..."

Hardly had she finished her remarks or a giant white tiger appeared in front of them, only several inches away from Autumn. She instantly fainted, out of sheer horror.

The tiger had elegantly jumped down from the roof of the house. Its head was as big as a millstone, terrifyingly protruding in Xu Yi's direction. The tusks in its mouth were so terrifying that even by looking at it, one couldn't help but shudder.

"It's you who killed my son!"

The man who was sitting on the back of the tiger rebuked angrily. He

had wrapped himself in a silver armor and he was even wearing a golden crown, which was an indication of his extravagant lifestyle.

After a while, the man on the back of the tiger jumped to the ground and stabbed his halberd towards one of the white slates, which was hit with a deafening thud, while all the surrounding slates were also crushed into pieces.

"You're just a fucking beast, don't you dare to scare me." Disregarding the man who was busy showing his strength with the halberd, Xu Yi stared at the tiger and slammed its cheek.

- Boom! -

The tiger groaned bitterly, as one of its cheeks was severely crooked. Moments ago, it looked majestically; but right now, it looked like a vulnerable cat, who was riddled with illnesses.

Xu Yi didn't show any sympathy towards this beast, as he continued to torture it by plucking its whiskers out. The tiger instinctively bounced off the ground, retreating to a safe distance from Xu Yi.

"I bet you're the notorious Jiang Shaochuan from the Black Dragon Palace. Yes, I killed your good-for-nothing son! I heard that you are an indecent bandit, aren't you?" Xu Yi laughed out loudly, showing no respect to Shaochuan.

With discerning eyes, Xu Yi had already seen through Shaochuan's tricks.

Since it was legal in Guanan to officially invite anyone to fight in the arena, sooner or later, Xu Yi would be forced to fight with the Black Dragon Palace. Given that, why would Shaochuan bother to visit Xu Yi personally? Because, he was trying to retake the refined iron!

To gain the upper hand in the situation, Shaochuan had decided to frighten Xu Yi by displaying his impressive strength and his formidable team of warriors.

However, in front of Xu Yi, who was full of shrewdness, Shaochuan had failed. Xu Yi wasn't intimidated at all by this purposeful display.

Actually, the banning of unregistered fighting in Guanan was the true reason that made Xu Yi so emboldened. He was 100% sure, that Shaochuan wouldn't fight with him right here and now, no matter how much hatred Shaochuan held.

Plus, Xu Yi did observe Shaochuan while he was exerting his power by waving the halberd, and he was certain that his opponent was at most a peak state cultivator of the forged body.

Shaochun didn't give up, nor did he pay attention to Xu Yi, as he continued to ceaselessly swirl his halberd in the air, almost creating a vortex.

To Shaochuan's disappointment, Xu Yi actually turned his back to him and actually picked up and carried Autumn in his arms. He then picked a

piece of a delicate green bean cake up, which was the size of a fingertip and was sculptured into a flower with sixteen petals. Xu Yi handed it over to Elder Mu and suggested him to immediately swallow it, not letting the taste fill his mouth. Interestingly, Xu Yi, on the other hand, slowly chewed on his piece of the cake, savoring every bite.

The indifference of Xu Yi irritated Shaochuan in such a way, that it even put his nose out of joint.

"You bastard, what do you want?" Shaochuan howled loudly to the sky.

"Get the hell off my property, all of you! You obnoxious and evil intruders!" Xu Yi replied casually, as he was picking up another rainbow-looking candy.

## Chapter 42 - Extortion

Shaochuan stared at Xu Yi with his scarlet red eyes. He was rather outraged, as well as confused by Xu Yi's response. He then knitted his eyebrows and waved to his warriors, as a sign to retreat. Eventually, all of them strode out with a hilarious conceitedness.

The giant tiger quickly made the last few meters to the threshold of Xu Yi's property and quickly jumped over it. This place had thoroughly creeped it out and it didn't wish to stay here any longer.

The cowardice of the tiger was in obvious discordance with the arrogant-looking parade, which greatly embarrassed Shaochuan, as he didn't want to lose face in front of Xu Yi. To vent his anger, Shaochuan threw his halberd towards the tiger, which narrowly missed the tiger. However, in order to escape from this attack, the tiger had to make a somersault and soar up into the sky.

Xu Yi observed the tiger, as if he was watching a circus show. He then turned to Shaochuan: "Buddy, wait a minute."

Xu Yi then carried Autumn to her room and laid her on the bed, before he went into the side room.

"Come in with me!" Xu Yi yelled at Shaochuan, with an undertone of spitefulness.

In the side room, Xu Yi was sitting on a chair, cross-legged. Shaochuan restrained himself from attacking this arrogant bastard in front of him. Instead he tightly clenched his fists, drawing blood on his palms, letting go of some of his frustration

"Murderer of my son! You're now the archenemy of my Black Dragon Palace. You know what? We've already investigated your background - you are merely a guard in plain clothing. I can randomly send anyone from the Black Dragon Palace and pulverise you like a roach. Do you believe in my words?" Shaochuan madly screamed at Xu Yi.

"Yes, I totally believe you! Please, do go on!" Xu Yi replied carelessly.

"You, you..."

Shaochuan felt like all of his intelligence had left his body, which left him unable to continue this conversation. Although he still had a bunch of intimidating words to throw at Xu Yi, he decided to give up.

But, how could Xu Yi trust the words of this man so easily?!

"Yeah, I believe that the Black Dragon Palace is mighty and influential. So, what am I supposed to do? Shall I commit suicide by cutting my throat and apologise to your dead son?" Xu Yi suggested ironically.

Shaochuan's original plan was to direct a bluffing show in front of Xu Yi to force him to hand over the refined iron. Initially, he had imagined to see Xu Yi's frightened face, or maybe to even seem him kneel down, begging for mercy. However, the unpredictable reaction of Xu Yi had left

Shaochuan speechless, as all of the plot lines he had thought out were now left in small bits and pieces.

“Young man, listen, you seem quite tough. I won’t waste anymore time on you. Let’s just cut to the chase. If you give us back the refined iron, I promise that all of our past hostilities will be wiped clean. I won’t even hold you responsible for my son’s death, as long as you return the refined iron. The Black Dragon Palace has millions of members all over the country; you won’t be able to hide anywhere. You’d better think it over very carefully, since it’s a matter of life and death!” Shaochuan changed his strategy. Because, as a leader, he was supposed to be smart and adaptable.

Since Xu Yi had killed his son in front of a large crowd of people, Shaochuan regarded Xu Yi as a boorish fellow, who would probably surrender under his deterrent force.

However, now, Shaochuan finally realised that Xu Yi was a person who would never feel enticed to the carrot or be browbeaten by the stick.

“Why does it take so long for you to speak out your true purpose. The earlier the better!” Xu Yi continued, as he still remained in his cross-legged position, “At first glance, the refined iron instantly caught my attention. However, after I tried to play with this thing several times, I realised that it’s useless for me. If you want it back, it’s all yours!”

“AAAHHHHHHHH!”

Shaochuan widened his mouth, reassuring himself that these unbelievable words were actually originating from Xu Yi. Immediately,



joyfulness filled his heart.

Since the death of his son, Shaochuan had been orchestrating plans to regain the refined iron from Xu Yi. Indeed, his mind was so occupied with the refined iron that he had almost completely forgotten about the death of his son.

“Then, give me the refined iron!” Shaochuan stretched his hand out towards Xu Yi, letting out a sigh of relief.

“What?! I never said that I would give it to you for free! Your evil son was doomed to die. But, what about the injuries that he afflicted to Elder Mu? What about the big carp? Oh, I almost forget, you’ve, just now, also ruined several pieces of my furniture. Plus, the compensation for the emotional damage...” Xu Yi listed a long line of things that he wished to obtain compensation for.

“Shut up, just let me know how much you wish to extort from me?” The naggingly long list made Shaochuan want to vomit. So he angrily interrupted.

In front of such a formidable enemy, Xu Yi chose to act rascally and shamelessly, without showing any sign of fear for the Black Dragon Palace.

“Great! 1,000 gold coins in total, er...I’ll offer you a discount, say, 800 gold coins. This is final, no bargaining.” Xu Yi replied with a subtle smile.

- Boom! -

Shaochuan punched his fist high in the air, the strength of which lifted the roof of the house almost immediately.

"Fuck off!" He could no longer hold his patience and show mock kindness to Xu Yi. No one in this world had ever spoken to him like this; he had also completely lost the initiative in this conversation. His flaming anger made all of his inner organs cramp, which slightly suppressed his breathing.

"Majesty Jiang, this house is not my private property, it belongs to the government. Well, I'll exclude the damage fee of the roof, and keep the price steady at 800 gold coins. If you accept it, then it's a win-win deal; if not, it's up to you to kill me right now or later in the arena. I'm ok with both." Xu Yi continued negotiating with Shaochuan, hoping to hoax some money from him.

Since he had left the Exquisite Pavilion, he had intentionally been waiting for the arrival of the Black Dragon Palace, precisely for this reason.

"Are you crazy? Believe it or not, but with 800 gold coins, I can buy ten servants like you!" Shaochuan gradually realised that Xu Yi was a money-lover, who took him as a potential opportunity to get rich.

However, no matter how much he disliked Xu Yi, his priority was to get the refined iron back.

It was easy to say that the refined iron would automatically fall into Shaochuan's pocket once Xu Yi was beaten to death in the arena. But, what if the bastard hid the refined iron in a secret place and left no clue about it?

That was why Shaochuan visited Xu Yi today.

"Don't tell me you cannot afford a mere 800 gold coins? Well, I have sensed your insincerity in this deal, therefore, I have to resort to other ways, or maybe I'll have it auctioned. This iron is rare, it must hit a high price." Xu Yi sneered .

"No way!"

The mentioning of the word "auction" stirred up his nerves, as Shaochuan exclaimed in rejection.

This morning, the auction in the Exquisite Pavilion had made headline news in Guanan. How Elder Shui had traded the Shen Yuan Pill for the refined iron.

On hearing these rumors, Shaochuan had hurried to Xu Yi's resident, suspecting that Xu Yi had already sold the refined iron to the Exquisite Pavilion.

In the beginning, Shaochuan sounded out Xu Yi about the refined iron and found out that Xu Yi hadn't identified the true value of it yet. He was sure the refined iron was still with Xu Yi.

Now, that Xu Yi planned to auction this refined iron, Shaochuan stopped him in a fury. Because he knew very well, that the day that this iron ball was revealed to the public, he would be in big trouble.

## Chapter 43 - Liar

"If you don't want to buy that thing, then I'll sell it to someone else. It's none of your business!" Xu Yi said with a face full of contempt.

Although Xu Yi didn't know that the refined iron was a stolen item, he did know that it was too precious to display it in public, especially when his cultivating ability wasn't compatible with the functions of this weapon.

As Xu Yi had already participated in the eye-opening auction at the Exquisite Pavilion, he understood that the price he offered was rather favorable.

"500 gold coins, no more!" Shaochuan bargained impatiently.

"900 gold coins! No less!" Xu Yi replied, as there was a touch of amusement in his voice. He was rather excited about the fact, that Shaochuan had taken the bait.

"You idiot, do you know anything about bargaining? You should offer me a lower price, rather than raising the price. Stop provoking me!" Shaochuan raised his eyebrows as high as possible.

Xu Yi tilted his chin, "Not another word, or I will raise the price even higher. If you really piss me off, I'll probably sell it to the Exquisite Pavilion at the price as low as one tael of silver! You really don't know how to appreciate favors, 900 gold coins, this is final!"

In his previous life, Xu Yi had been through various online chatting and quarrelling, so he wasn't a rookie when it came to debating.

Shaochuan felt like there were numerous flickers of furious fire licking inside his brain; He felt like he was about to explode if he stayed here any longer. Therefore, he turned around and flew after his soldiers.

He rummaged through their pockets and added the findings to his own gold cheque, which, all together, barely added up to 900 gold coins. Soon, he staggered back into Xu Yi's room.

Compared to the imposing manner with which he had initially passed the threshold, now he was more like a sorehead, trying to find a way to finish this mental battle as soon as possible.

"Here it is!" Shaochuan slammed the money on the bench that stood next to Xu Yi.

As the saying goes, money is the panacea - even those who are blind will open their eyes, while those who are crippled will stand up by the simple temptation that is money. Xu Yi had acted like a lassitude invertebrate ever since Shaochuan had invaded on his property. However, right now, he was surprisingly lively, as he bounced up from the chair, while his eyes lit up. He immediately snatched the gold coins from the bench and, with a serious face, started counting it.

Xu Yi then tucked all the money into his waist pocket, before he lifted his feet forward.

Shaochuan rushed to Xu Yi in a flurry, trying to get in his way.

"What are you doing? Do you think I'm running away with the money? Ridiculous! Only idiots will bring such treasures with them, I locked it in the safe." Xu Yi explained.

Shaochuan reluctantly stepped back.

After a short while, Xu Yi took out an elegantly-decorated folding fan and he unfolded the fan when he stood in front of Shaochuan again.

"I don't need a fan! Give me the refined iron!" Shaochuan frowned.

"This is what you've just bought from me for 900 gold coins... Take it!" Xu Yi replied as he threw the folding fan towards Shaochuan.

"What? Can you say that again?" The infuriated Shaochuan stood there like a timebomb, ready to explode.

"This folding fan was once your son's personal belonging. I picked it up because of its special design and delicate material. Now, since you agreed to buy it at a high price, why should I reject the deal? Don't tell me you're going to go back on your words?" Xu Yi justified himself coldly, prevaricating with a forged story.

"Shameless liar! Bastard! ...." Shaochun pinned his glaring eyes onto Xu Yi and bombarded him with a load of dirty words.

Returning to his chair, Xu Yi crossed his legs, as he started to rhythmically drum his fingers on the arm of the chair.

Shaochuan managed to calm himself down a little bit, before he continued his debate with Xu Yi, "To some extent, you've become famous since you've killed my son. Don't you even care about your public image? What would others say, if they were to know that you're such a shameless liar?"

"Wake up, old man. I haven't mentioned the refined iron in our conversation, all I said was "that thing". I suppose that you need this folding fan as a memento of your son. Anyway, you've submitted the money, which is a sign of confirming this deal. Don't blame me, blame yourself!" Xu Yi quibbled without a pause.

Shaochuan was completely shocked, as his tongue got twisted.

It was really a battle of intelligence and eloquence and, obviously, Xu Yi had outwitted Shaochuan in the first round. Like playing cards, Xu Yi had already seen the cards in Shaochuan's hands, whereas Shaochuan didn't have any clue about Xu Yi's cards. Thus, the result was self-telling.

"Fuck! I should've revealed my true intention directly, rather than beating around the bush. My strategy has failed! Now, listen, if you hand over the refined iron, I will still keep my promise and never force you to a fight. If not, hmmm, I bet you'll go to hell before you're able to use those 900 gold coins. I can hire the most excellent cultivators, as long as I give them a hefty amount of rewards. I don't know how many rounds you'll survive." Finally, Shaochuan erupted like a volcano.



“Hey, Mr. Jiang, I’m afraid you’re too obsessed with your orchestrated “drama”. Well, to tell you the truth, I’m fed up with your phony attitude, because I know for a fact, that you won’t be lenient to me, even if I give you the refined iron. If you’re a beauty, I would probably give you some more “showtime”, but look at you, you’re so ugly. Oh, by the way, what about the man hidden behind the door? Why don’t you invite him in?!” Xu Yi rolled his eyes scornfully.

“What? How does he know?” Shaochuan murmured, almost to himself.

“That man, who’s squatting under the gate, why don’t you just stand up and come in to have a cup of tea?” Xu Yi continued.

The hypersensitivity that was bestowed upon him by his powerful soul, greatly helped Xu Yi, which would certainly be an advantage in his future fights.

Since Shaochuan and the group of armored warriors had stepped in, Xu Yi had sensed that there had always been one person, who was hiding behind the door.

As Xu Yi predicted, a man in green clothing entered the house, while he coughed a little bit to conceal his embarrassment, “I’m the deputy director of the Finance and Taxation Department in Guanan, my name is Chen Bing. Now, Xu Yi, listen carefully. On behalf of the government, I’m here to notify you that you’re invited by the Black Dragon Palace to fight with Gao Pan, the second in command of the White Horse Palace. This fight will take place as early as tomorrow. Xu Yi, either accept the invitation or leave Guanan immediately.”

"I accept this invitation!" Xu Yi replied without any hesitation, he then glanced at Shaochuan, "I remember you've promised me, that if I hand over the refined iron, you'll cancel the fight?"

Shaochuan's face blushed as nothing was more embarrassing than when the bubble of lies got poked open. Just now, he had vowed to Xu Yi, that he wouldn't invite him to a fight, as long as the refined iron was returned. However, he had already arranged for Chen Bing to wait outside the house, so the latter could announce the official invitation of the challenge.

What made Shaochuan lose even more face, was the fact that he had not only failed to get back the refined iron, but also lost 900 gold coins in the process!

"Son of a bitch! Wash your head today, because tomorrow, it'll be taken of your neck!" Shaochuan cursed at Xu Yi, before he turned around and left. He figured that Xu Yi could be the best scapegoat for the stolen refined iron.

# Chapter 44 – The Fighting Samadhi State

While he bathed in the moonlight, Xu Yi squatted and stretched his arms, holding two stone locks, which weighed approximately 25 kilograms each. The chilly breeze that came from the mountains cooled the shirtless Xu Yi, leaving him calm and relaxed.

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It was almost noon when Shaochuan had left his house. After he left, Xu Yi had finished his lunch, before he took a bath. When he walked back out into his courtyard, he noticed two stone locks, which suddenly piqued his interest.

Now that he had already entered into the peak state of a forged body, the maximum strength he could exert would be equivalent to that of an ox and a half. These two stone locks weighed a grand total of 50 kilograms and would certainly pose no threat to Xu Yi. However, Xu Yi figured out a new pose to hold the stone locks in, in order to enhance his cultivation.

Even for non-cultivators, they were able to lift up a gunny bag as heavy as fifty kilograms, which was absolutely within their limits. But what if they were asked to hold it single-handedly? Even when it was only 5 kilograms, they would instantly give up, let alone 50 kilograms!

Xu Yi stretched his arms forward and held his palms upward, as he was holding the two stone locks. For such a difficult pose, it was almost impossible for normal cultivators to sustain even 5 kilograms of weight for a prolonged period of time.

Moreover, the bar of the stone lock was long and thin, making it increasingly difficult to steadily hold it in one's palm. Xu Yi adjusted his palms slightly up and down, trying to find a balance. Two hours quickly passed and Xu Yi was on the verge of collapsing, despite his great resistance to pain.

However, Xu Yi was not an easy quitter, as he continued to practice for another two hours. Consequently, his arms were numb and sweat welled up from every pore. It was fair to say that, in the first two hours, it was his body's strength that was able to sustain the pressure of the stone lock. But in the later two hours, it was solely his unswerving will that kept these two stone locks high up in the air.

- Boom! -

Suddenly, Xu Yi felt his physical body lightened, as he could barely feel the weight of his body. At the same time, there emerged an unspeakable ecstasy deep within his soul. As always, Xu Yi would obtain spiritual happiness whenever he reached his physical limits.

Xu Yi couldn't help but wonder why this happened. He guessed that, to some extent, the physical body and the spiritual soul enhanced each other. The stronger the man, the more vigorous he became, and vice versa, vigor was a direct reflection of one's state of soul.

Actually, what Xu Yi obtained right now was a mimic state of Zen Samadhi [1]. In the cultivation world, this was known as the "Fighting Samadhi".

In the Zen culture, the monks would sit in meditation for a couple of days, without eating and sleeping, as per the rules. They spiritually detached themselves from the mundane world, in order to purify their consciousness through deep reflection.

Under hyper-intensive practice, Xu Yi gradually reached this state of "Fighting Samadhi", where the soul enhanced the body to be more resilient and tough.

The legendary Victorious Fighting Buddha was said to enter this state of "Fighting Samadhi" during his fights. Now, Xu Yi had reached this state, how lucky he was!

On one hand, the physical body embraced and protected the soul.

While on the other hand, the soul nourished and enhanced the physical body.

While enjoying this amazing state, a sudden shouting broke his meditation.

"Uncle Xu, How much longer will you be practicing? I'm so hungry right now..." Autumn nagged, as she popped her head out through the door.

- Boom! -

With a quiver in his body, the wonderful state of meditation instantly collapsed. The stone locks simultaneously slipped off from his palms, while Xu Yi stood still with blank eyes.

Still mesmerized by this spiritual state, Xu Yi tried to force himself back to reality. He touched his arms, to ensure whether there was any change going on, but he couldn't tell the difference.

"Uncle, My stomach is flat, touch it." Autumn ran out and grabbed one of Xu Yi's legs, pouting like a spoiled child.

"The delivery man is at the doorway, go and get the food." Hardly had Xu Yi's words faded away, or a knocking sound could be heard coming from the bronze gate.

Out of excitement, Autumn let go of Xu Yi's leg and darted towards the gate.

"Ah!" Xu Yi tapped on his forehead in great rejoice, as he suddenly realised that his soul had become even more acute and sensitive than before.

Previously, Xu Yi's sensitiveness could only be activated within the circumference of 30 meters. Plus, the sound and images he could feel were rather blurry and ambiguous. Whereas, after reaching the Fighting Samadhi state, he didn't only expand his scope, but also sharpened his eyesight and hearing multiple times.

Just now, Xu Yi sensed the upcoming delivery man holding the bronze ring on the gate, ready to knock. This was solid evidence to convince himself, that the power of his soul had just made a qualitative leap forward.

Xu Yi stretched his arms wide open and fully relaxed himself by closing his eyes. He stayed in this position for quite a long time, allowing his consciousness to be fully exploited.

A vivid picture of nature emerged in his head:

On the highest bough of the tall tree beside the house, a new-born baby eagle raised its head, awaiting for the food his mother would bring, as she was indeed holding a juicy worm in her mouth.

Down in the sewer, a snake egg started cracking, indicating that a new life was about to be born.

And in the chilly breeze, the leaves of the bamboo trees gave out a whirling sound.

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Later that night, after Elder Mu had taken his medicine and returned to bed, Xu Yi went back out to the courtyard to relax himself.

Soon, Autumn came out and jumped on his legs, listening to Xu Yi, as he told her a bunch of interesting stories. Eventually he stopped, as the little girl in his arm had started to snore loudly.

The moonlight shone brightly into every nook and cranny of the

courtyard, allowing Xu Yi to do some reading. He thumbed through a book, while he occasionally raised his eyes into the vast and starry sky.

The sparkling stars calmed him down, as if he was melting himself into the vastness of the universe. As a drifter, only under the tranquility of the night sky, did he become reminiscent of his previous life.

"I want to accompany the flying immortal, to wander about in heaven and to embrace the bright moon through eternity. (挟飞仙以遨游, 抱明月而长终.) Maybe, when I cultivate to a certain stage, I will be able to transcend this endless circle of reincarnation and, perhaps, even return to my previous life... WOW!" Xu Yi whispered to himself.

- Dong! Dong! Dong! -

A heavy knock on the door interrupted Xu Yi. Being alerted; he took Autumn to her bedroom and rushed to the door.

"Teacher Zhou! What's up? It's late at night." Xu Yi asked.

Teacher Zhou was trying to catch his breath, but couldn't utter even a single word, even though he desperately tried to.

All of a sudden, another man appeared and clasped Xu Yi by the shoulder,

"Boss, good news! There is a fight going on, and I know for sure who'll be the winner. Don't hesitate, just give me the money, I'll earn it back multiple times over!" The man was scrawny, square-faced and he was



carrying a gigantic bag upon his back. Looking closer, Xu Yi realised that this was his newly employed lackey, Qinghua.

Xu Yi quickly introduced them to each other, before inviting them in.

Several minutes later, Xu Yi figured out what was going on.

This afternoon, the Guanan government had announced that there would be a purple flag fight (purple stands for cultivators in the peak state of a forged body) tomorrow. All the citizens had been shocked by this news, as it had been long since the last purple flag had appeared in the arena.

Tomorrow's fight was undeniably ranked as a top level one, which was already stirring Guanan up, especially those who were obsessed with gambling.

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[1]: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samadhi>

## Chapter 45 - Gambling

"Buddy, why are you so confident in determining the winner?" Xu Yi smiled as he filled a cup of tea in front of Teacher Zhou.

"Boss, one of the candidates is Gao Pan, who has already achieved eight successive wins in the arena. He is considered to be the best fighter in Guanan. However, his opponent, the so called Legendary Guard Yi, is an inexperienced newcomer here. Even though there are rumors being spread, that he has great potential in Wu Dao, I don't think potential alone will win him this fight..." Qinghua replied.

"Legendary Guard Yi?" Xu Yi cut in, he couldn't figure out why he was idolized as a legend. In Guanan, he was low-profiled, because he had only recently arrived here as a "refugee" to escape the doomful revenge of the Black Dragon Palace. It should be almost impossible for people on the streets to know anything about him.

"Ah, you asked the right person. I have some inside information to share with you, you know, my extended social circle allows me to easily obtain first-hand information..." Qinghua immediately used this opportunity to brag about his sociability.

"I'm not interested in your sociable abilities; just get straight to the point!" Xu Yi commanded, as he glared at Qinghua.

"The legendary name-calling is a rumor that was fabricated by the casino, which is used to lure gamblers into their trap. As Gao Pan is

almost a household name in Guanan, everyone will bet on him. But a one-sided gamble won't guarantee any profits for the casino. So in an attempt to balance the betting, they came up with such a bold strategy. Quite frankly, the casino itself is confident that Gao Pao will win his ninth fight and if everyone is to bet on the winner, they'll be doomed. Under such circumstances, the casino only has two options to choose from..." Qinghua enunciated with great passion.

"The first option is to increase [1] the odds for a Gao Pan victory, in order to confuse the public. Even though, this method won't deceive the more experienced gamblers, but it can successfully serve the purpose of disturbing public opinion. After all, innocent girls and young married women account for a great number of the gamblers."

"How about the odds for the "Legendary" Guard Yi?"

"The odds for that guard is two to one!"

"How come? If Gao Pan's odds were to be set at ten to one, then Guard Yi's should be at the very least equal, or preferably even as high as twenty to one. As you just said, the casino intends to discourage people from betting on Gao Pan, in doing so, they should raise Yi's odds drastically. Plus, if both sides have low odds, how can the casino reap the money?"

"At first, the casino rejected to start a bet for this fight, as the result is self-telling. However, in order to maintain their reputation, they maneuvered the odds at a reasonable rate to earn the trust of their gamblers. After all, they don't want to lose the trust of their customers."

"The difference between the odds between Gao Pan and Guard Yi

should be controlled in a reasonable range, otherwise, no one would believe the rumors."

"....."

Thanks to his gambling experience, Qinghua accurately analyzed the situation and he was currently rather proud of himself. However, it was also because of this gambling habit of his, that he had seldom accumulated any wealth during these years. Each month, he would pour his earnings into the casino, he did win sometimes, yet most of the time, he lost all of his money.

Realising all the tricks played by the casino, Xu Yi was filled with fury, considering he himself used to be one of the innocent partakers, who was just a piece of chess played by the casino. The only thing he could do right now was to curse at their dishonesty.

"Boss, the fluctuation of the odds keeps changing like the clouds in the sky, so it is hard to say if the odds for Gao Pan will further plummet. There is no time to hesitate anymore. We need to seize this opportunity to make a fortune. I've already put all my money on Gao Pan, including the ten gold coins I earned from you. Look, this is a receipt from the casino. Trust me!" Qinghua gestured hysterically as he urged Xu Yi.

"Enough! Stop gushing out saliva! I'll bet immediately." Xu Yi impatiently replied.

Xu Yi reached into his waist pocket and took out a pile of gold cheques, "1,200 gold coins in total!"

The 900 gold coins he had obtained earlier that day, plus 300 of the 350 remaining gold coins in his pocket, which added up to a total amount of 1,200 gold coins. Xu Yi took a total worth of 1,200 gold coins out, which would give himself almost no leeway!

Even those from prominent families wouldn't go this far when gambling. Xu Yi's actions left Qinghua completely dumbfounded.

"Alright... Boss, please rest assured that I'll come back with more money!" Being afraid of the fluctuating odds, Qinghua quickly snatched the cheques from Xu Yi's hand and lifted his feet.

"You don't have to be in such a hurry. I'm not yet finished... I'll bet on that "Legendary" Guard Yi." Xu Yi calmly said, as he pulled Qinghua back.

"What?" Qinghua jerked his head towards Xu Yi, "Are you playing a cruel joke on me, boss? That guard is doomed to be chopped apart by Gao Pan. If you bet on him, it's no different from throwing your money in the river. Oh, come on boss, don't bet on Guard Xu, if you insist on throwing your money away, why don't just give it to me!" Qinghua nearly went insane upon hearing Xu Yi's unexpected decision.

"Shut up! Do you even know who this "Legendary" Guard Yi is?"

"You know him?"

"Ofcourse I do, it's me!"

"What?! Oh...."

Qinghua stepped back, as if he was spooked by a ghost. It took several minutes for him to calm down just a little bit. Looking up at the nameplate on the gate, he came to the realisation that this house was an official building for guards. Plus, his boss's name "Yi Xu" offered another clue to convince him. No wonder, at the time when the casino announced the odds, Xu Yi's house was under close surveillance.

Dropping the luggage that he carried on his back, Qinghua shot a sympathetic look at Xu Yi. On one side, he was saddened by the fact that his boss would soon be killed by Gao Pan. On the other side, he was afraid to lose his impressive salary.

Xu Yi glanced back at Qinghua, "Don't stand about idling. Go and do what you're supposed to do! Don't worry. I don't owe you any salary, even if I am beaten to death in the arena. Just go!"

"Boss, I'm concerned about you! Well, I'm afraid that this is probably my last time to serve you. Good luck, boss!" Qinghua quickly finished his words, before he disappeared in the darkness.

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[1]: Editor note: Hey guys, I hope you guys won't be upset with me over this, but I've gone ahead and slightly deviated from the original. The increase and decrease of the betting size in the original, is laughable and doesn't make any sense... So I've gone ahead and slightly adjusted it, so that it actually does make sense ;)

## Chapter 46 – Uncaring and Nonchalant

“Look at you, you’re so calm! It seems that you’re rather confident in tomorrow’s fight, huh?” Teacher Zhou sipped his tea, holding the stem of the tea-leaf in his mouth.

“Nope. Honesty, I’m not sure if tomorrow is the last day of my life. However, I have to face it, no matter what. Instead of pushing myself down the abyss of worries and anxieties, why shouldn’t I just be happy and relaxed on the day before my last?” Xu Yi neatly replied, but there was a clear undertone of helplessness in his voice.

“That doesn’t make sense. I mean, if you aren’t sure about tomorrow’s fight, why would you bet all of your money on yourself?”

“Look, what would this money mean to me if I die in the arena tomorrow? However, if I manage to win, I can seize this opportunity to instantly create a small fortune.”

“Hahaha... You’re a smart kid, even when facing such a fierce storm, you still manage to exhibit a spirit of liberty and reasonableness!”

Teacher Zhou finished his cup of tea, before he continued, “My concern for you is totally unnecessary. You outwit most of the cultivators I have encountered. Besides, I admire your stable mentality in front of fatal danger. Given all of these characteristics you possess, you must’ve already made your own plans. Would you mind sharing them with me? Perhaps, I’ll be able to offer you with some kind of advice.”

Lifting the teapot, Xu Yi walked over to Teacher Zhou and refilled his cup, "I don't have any plans. The only principle that I adhere to, is to attack the opponent's weakness by using my advantage."

"I'm so glad that you figured this out." Teacher Zhou nodded, while his gnarled face split into a smile, "Many people cultivate Wu Dao behind closed doors and act blindly, without knowing any ingenious ways to maneuver around in a fight. Fortunately, you aren't one of them. Well, given all of this, I'm no longer worried about receiving my wine." Teacher Zhou stood up, before he staggered out of the house, while humming a weird ditty.

Shortly after Teacher Zhou left, Qinghua spurted back into the room, with the portable bag dangling around his waist.

Wiping the sweat off his forehead, he put a pile of papers on the stone desk. He then grabbed and lifted the teapot high up in the air, allowing the cool liquid to pour into his burning throat [1]. After a short while, he took out two black-colored receipts, one of which was for Xu Yi. "Boss, it's done! The odds were still two to one!"

"How come there are two black receipts?" Xu Yi remembered, that the previous receipt Qinghua showed to him was a red one.

"I have sold the previous receipt and bought a new one, so I could bet on you! I'm a loyal guy, you can ask around in Guan'an about this. By doing so, I wish to show people that the two of us are in the same boat." Qinghua explained vehemently.

Even though Qinghua labeled himself as "loyal", he was far from that.



All his pretended loyalty was simply a result of careful calculation.

Earlier, in the Eastern City, Qinghua had the impression that Xu Yi was a frugal person, who would haggle over every penny. However, just before, Xu Yi had poured all of his money into this gamble, without as much as blinking his eyes. This bold action convinced Qinghua that Xu Yi was rather confident in tomorrow's fight, thus he flip-flopped on his betting object, attempting to make a profit.

Xu Yi had already seen through Qinghua's trick, but he still gave him a thumbs up.

"Boss, just a kind reminder: once you step into the arena, your life is in the hands of Gao Pan. Strategically speaking, we should not underestimate your opponent, who boasts eight consecutive wins! It cannot be explained by mere luck. Now, look, I have gathered his background information, as well as the details of his previous eight fights." Qinghua quickly explained, as he nudged the pile of papers into Xu Yi's hands.

On one side, Qinghua desired to keep this long-term employment relationship with Xu Yi, so as to ensure his steady income. On the other side, since Qinghua had bet on Xu Yi, so it was in his best interest to do everything within his power, to help Xu Yi win the fight.

"Thanks for your hard work, I really appreciate it. I will look over these materials when I'm back in my room. Oh, the second room on the left is your bedroom." Xu Yi quickly said, before he took the pile of papers and went to his room.

With a despising glance at the pile of papers, Xu Yi hurled it into a nearby trash bin.

It wasn't out of unscrupulousness; rather, it was positive confidence. During the previous two years, Xu Yi had experienced all kinds of inhuman torture, both physically and mentally. But now, the sufferings finally blossomed and bore fruits – a frightening and invincible body and a hypersensitive soul. Therefore, he had every reason to be confident.

In addition, the Long'er Scalp he bought from the auction would serve him as a defensive item during the fight, which would certainly reduce the risk of being killed.

Putting the Long'er Scalp on the desk, Xu Yi rubbed it with adoration. Even without any lights in the room, Xu Yi could still see the Long'er Scalp in detail. He then playfully tore the scalp into various shapes.

Originally, Xu Yi planned to pay someone to make it into protective clothing. However, given the imminent fight, he decided to make it himself.

A bit later, feeling tired and drowsy, Xu Yi threw himself onto his bed and quickly fell into a deep slumber.

The next morning, Xu Yi woke up late, as the sunlight was already shining brightly through the cracks of the window.

He opened the window, inhaling a deep breath of fresh air. Near the flower pool, he saw Elder Mu, who was jogging with the support of a

crutch. At the same time, Autumn was kicking a rainbow-colored shuttlecock, up and down into the air.

The fragrance of the flowers filled the air. Taking another deep breath, Xu Yi soaked himself in the serenity of this moment. If not for his wish to find revenge for his fallen family, he would rather stay here forever, together with Elder Mu and Autumn.

“Boss, you’re awake!” Qinghua hurriedly filled the washbasin with water and put it in front of Xu Yi. He had been waiting outside Xu Yi’s room since early in the morning.

After Xu Yi finished washing himself, Qinghua brought out a variety of foods and placed them on the table – steamed meat dumplings, steamed twisted rolls, fried dough sticks, Chinese hamburgers, and a bottle of fresh milk. He urged Xu Yi to eat all of it, as to ensure his strength for the upcoming fight.

As expected, Xu Yi quickly finished all of the food, as well as the milk.

Xu Yi satisfactorily wiped his greasy mouth, before he took out 10 gold coins, “Qinghua, go and find a spacious house nearby. We’ll all move to the new place. After all, this is an official building, not a permanent living place. Oh, don’t forget to hire several servants, who are able to do some cooking and cleaning. Take it, ten gold coins.”

[TL Note: Sorry for the confusion. It seems that I’ve made a mistake on the amount of money. Actually, Xu Yi had betted 1,200 gold coins, rather than the 1,250 gold coins originally mentioned in the previous chapter (Editor note: Already changed it in the previous chapter). There were still

50 gold coins left in his pocket.]

Despite the rough times he had been through, Xu Yi was more of a hedonist. As long as it was financially possible, he wouldn't let himself down in material comfort.

Qinghua parted his mouth, as he was stunned by the extreme calmness of his boss. Up until now, Xu Yi didn't mention a word about the fight; instead, he started to worry about their living conditions.

The life and death battle was around the corner, how could Xu Yi be so uncaring and nonchalant?

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[1]: I would hope the water in the teapot is cold by now.

## Chapter 47 - Promise

At this very moment, Xu Yi seemed to be more worried about moving into a bigger house, rather than about the fight. Even though, Xu Yi and Gao Pan were both in the peak state of a forged body, meaning that the fight could go either way.

"Ah, don't forget to buy me a well-knit string, as thin as a fish wire. It should be more than three meters long. I'll use it in today's fight." Xu Yi glanced at Qinghua, as if he had just remembered an important thing.

Without uttering a single word, Qinghua turned away and flew off into the distance, disappearing in a mere second. Xu Yi was stunned by the speed of Qinghua, as he started to wonder if his lackey had actually reached the middle state of a forged body.

The truth was, under great mental pressure, the overwrought Qinghua was on the verge of madness. He was much more nervous than Xu Yi, as if he was the one who would be fighting in the arena later today. His impatient disposition drove him to run away like a flash of lightning.

A short while later, Qinghua returned with a string in his hand. "Boss, look what I've found. This is a Dragon-Binding String from the Gold Refinement Palace. It's extremely firm and tenacious. You know, the senior ocean fishers will use this string to capture whales. However, the price is insanely high. You know how much it costs? It costs three gold coins for every 3.3 meters! Ha, ha... No wonder the Gold Refinement Palace is swimming in money.."

Qinghua demonstrated the string as he kept on gabbling. The string was as thin as a thread of hair, transparent and exquisite. To further convince Xu Yi, Qinghua took out a dagger from his chest pocket and struck at the string. Afterwards, he exerted all of his strength and jerked the string. Undoubtedly, however, all of his efforts proved to be in vain.

Xu Yi quickly snatched the string from Qinghua's hands, because he couldn't wait any longer to try it out himself. With a big grin, he tucked the string away into his pocket.

"Is anybody there?" Suddenly, the shouts from the doorway distracted their attention from the string. Qinghua immediately dashed to the front gate. Soon, he came back and informed Xu Yi that the government had dispatched an official, who came here to notify them, that in only two hours from now the fight would begin.

"I'll change my clothes. Tell them, that I'll be out soon." Xu Yi instructed Qinghua.

On the way to his bedroom, Xu Yi bumped into Autumn, "Uncle, are you going to fight with someone?"

"Not exactly. I'm going to kick some bastard's ass. Don't worry, I'll bring back some snacks for you tonight." Xu Yi picked the little girl up, as his fingertips traced the porcelain-like cheeks. He kissed Autumn on her forehead, showing this tender affection for this naughty, yet adorable little girl.

At the same time, Autumn touched the beard of her uncle, as she sincerely said: "Uncle, I wish you all the best. No matter how severe you

get injured, please come back home. Promise me.”

“Silly girl. What are you talking about? Remember, your uncle is rivalless.” He slightly pinched her face, realising that Autumn had been worrying about him.

“Yes! My uncle is the best of the best!” Autumn nodded her head fiercely.

After changing his clothes, Xu Yi went to Elder Mu’s bedroom to bring him his medicine.

Soon, the carriage from the government arrived in front of his house and Xu Yi jumped on top of it. The cart-driver whipped the horse and guided it towards the direction of the Eastern City, where the arena was set up.

The moment the carriage went through the fortified gate of the Eastern City, Xu Yi was stunned by the horrifying tranquility. The last time he had entered Eastern City, which was several days ago, he had been greatly impressed by the hustle and bustle on the streets. In distinct contrast with the previous vibrancy, today’s Eastern City was almost like a ghost city, or a storm-stricken city, which still suffered from its aftermath – you could hardly encounter anyone on the street, not even a shadow; plus, most of the shops had hung out a plate that read “CLOSED”.

Several minutes later, they arrived at an egg-shaped building. Soon, the cart-driver fastened the reigns of the horse to a column, while a man in green clothing guided Xu Yi into that magnificent architecture.

Walking on the processional road (paved path leading to the main hall), they made their way into the spacious main hall. Oddly, there was no furniture in the hall, except for a iron-forged long desk that stood in the middle. Beside the desk, there sat an elder man with a hoary beard, fixing his eyes on an old and discolored book. Occasionally, he would take a sip from the cup of tea on the desk.

“Elder Ning, this is one of the candidates. I suggest, that we start the blood test.” The man in green clothing broke the silence.

Suddenly, Xu Yi realised, that the old man behind the table was the judge of the fight.

Consequently, Xu Yi dropped his thick and deep-colored blood on a piece of white rock. Instantly, a glow emerged on the rock – a mixture color of gold, purple, black, white and green. Soon, the colors all faded away, except for the green and white.

“I can confirm that Yi Xu is in the peak state of a forged body!” Elder Ning exclaimed, and made a stamp on a piece of paper, which he then quickly sealed.

Finishing his job, Elder Ning went back to his chair and continued reading his book.

When the man in green clothing was about to leave, another man, who was also wearing green clothing, entered and whispered something in the first man in green clothing’s ear.



Despite the low voice, Xu Yi could still clearly hear their words, "General Gao is waiting for Yi Xu."

Afterwards, the man in green clothing led Xu Yi out of the main hall, and lead him to a private room.

Once they opened the door, General Gao stood up from a wicker chair, holding a goblet of fruit wine in his hands. He was in the middle of a cheerful conversation with three men in white clothing.

General Gao waved away the man in green clothing and smiled at Xu Yi, "You must be Yi Xu, the murderous maniac that killed a dozen man in the name of the 'Laws and Decrees of Empire Yu', correct?"

"Yes, I am. But to clear things up, I'm not a murderous maniac, I just killed those evil guys, who represent the destabilising elements of our society. As a guard, it's my job to do so. You know, violence must be met by violence." Xu Yi greeted General Gao's gaze, behaving neither overbearing nor servile.

Teacher Zhou once told Xu Yi that General Gao was in favor of him. So Xu Yi guessed, that General Gao would do him no harm.

"Awesome! It seems we share the same values, my fellow man." General Gao replied with sparkling eyes, "Theoretically, you should be rewarded for killing the mobs. However, the Guanan government is profit-driven, they won't deny an invitation from the Black Dragon Palace, even though I did try several times to persuade them."

"Don't worry, General Gao. I'm not afraid of those filthy demons from the Black Dragon Palace!" Xu Yi's voice was filled with overconfidence.

Since Xu Yi had become a guard in the Hibiscus Town, he had tasted the benefits of being a government official. And currently, he aspired to quickly climb high on the ladder to become a high-positioned government official.

At this point, General Gao was the right person to follow. Xu Yi anticipated that if he behaved politely, General Gao would look down on him. On the contrary, if he behaved unrestrainedly, General Gao would probably like him more.

As expected, General Gao laughed out loudly, "I howl and sing to the sky with wide joy, arrogantly and domineering! (我自狂歌向天啸, 飞扬跋扈为谁雄). Bohan, Peilin, Zhongshu, what do you guys think of Yi Xu?"

"You're a man of vision!"

"You've never failed in judging people."

The men that sat next to General Gao flattered him with big smiles, except for Zhongshu.

"Zhongshu, you seem to have a different opinion, say it!" General Gao ordered.

"I don't dare to hold an opposite opinion to you, General. I just wonder, er...I'm afraid that this glib-tongued young man doesn't match his

reputation. He talks big, even in front of an imminent fight.” Zhongshan blurted out.

Xu Yi shot a resentful look at Zhongshu, as it confused him where the hostility from Zhongshu came from, since this was the first time they met each other.

## Chapter 48 – 100,000 Gold Coins

“Don’t take it amiss. He is a straightforward person, who will say whatever is on his mind. My apologies. I haven’t even introduced them to you. These 3 men are my assistants, the guards in white clothing. The fat one is Qi Bohan, the slim one is Song Peilin, and the straightforward one is Li Zhongshu.” General Gao smiled at Xu Yi, as he was slightly embarrassed by Zhongshu’s straightforwardness.

“Yi Xu, I have informed the Black Dragon Palace, that they’ll only have three opportunities to invite you to a life and death battle in the arena. As long as you survive three rounds, I’ll give you a white guard uniform as a reward. At that point, if the Black Dragon Palace still comes after you, I’ll publicly support you.” General Gao added.

“General! Think twice!” His three assistants exclaimed in unison.

General Gao waved his hands, “I won’t change my mind. Look, it has been more than two years since I moved to Guanan. I haven’t seen any guard have the kind of courage to kill those lawless bastards in public. Nor have I seen any guards like Yi Xu, who take the ‘Laws and Decrees of Empire Yue’ so seriously. If Yi Xu manages to win three rounds against the Black Dragon Palace, I’ll promote him to the white guard ranking. He would be deserving of it.”

“General, I won’t let you down!” Xu Yi chuckled to himself, if he was given the white clothing, it would be a double jump in the ranking. Among the five official rankings – gold, purple, black, white and green, as a plain clothing guard, he was not even within the ranking. Once he got the white clothing, he would actually skip the green ranking and be of

the same status as General Gao's three assistants.

"Alright, your time is limited. You'd better store up your energy and prepare for the fight. Goodluck today, I'll be cheering for you." General Gao planted one of his hands on Xu Yi's shoulder, as a sign of encouragement.

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In the neighboring private room, Shaochuan walked to and fro, full of frustration.

With a long and squeaking sound, the luxurious and flower-engraved door opened. Two people stepped into his room. The left one was a tall guy with a stalwart build, wearing a set of gold armor, while his hair reached to his shoulders. He looked disdainfully at the surroundings. This was the second in command of the White Horse Palace – Gao Pao, Xu Yi's opponent! The other guy was a slim and gentle-looking man, holding a folding fan in his hands and wearing a scarf on his head. This was the main adviser of the Black Dragon Palace – Ma Wensheng.

The moment both men stepped in, Shaochuan flew towards them, and shot a smile of gratitude at Wensheng. However, when he anchored his eyes on Gao Pan, his smile turned into a poker face, while his mouth tightened, "Why do you always keep a distance from me? If not for Wensheng, you wouldn't be here, would you?"

It had been only two months, since Gao Pao had sworn loyalty to the White Horse Palace. However, because of his special background, he couldn't care less about Shaochuan, even though the latter was his boss.

Originally, Shaochuan had planned to fight Xu Yi himself, in the hope that he could take the refined iron away in secret, without notifying the Black Dragon Palace. However, the warlike Gao Pan reported to the Black Dragon Palace directly and recommended himself for the life and death battle.

As a result, Shaochuan's plan was disrupted by Gao Pan. Despite Shaochuan's indignation towards Gao Pan, he had to cooperate with him to ensure that victory would be obtained. Since Shaochuan's good-for-nothing son was killed by Xu Yi, the reputation of the Black Dragon Palace was damaged to a great degree. They were eager to win back their credibility through this fight. As a representative of the Black Dragon Palace, if Gao Pan lost this battle, the Black Dragon Palace would most likely become a laughingstock, and Shaochuan would surely be punished.

If Xu Yi was just a rough fellow with little intelligence, Gao Pan would definitely win the fight. Nevertheless, after yesterday's humiliating experience at Xu Yi's residence, Shaochuan became rather alert of Xu Yi. Though he had no clue about Xu Yi's genuine strength, he was convinced that Xu Yi was resourceful and tricky. And he worried, that the powerful, yet brainless, Gao Pan would slip into the traps Xu Yi would orchestrate.

In order to discuss with Gao Pan and think out a countermeasure to crash Xu Yi's possible tactics, Shaochuan had invited Gao Pan many times, yet the headstrong guy relentlessly declined. That was why Shaochuan asked Wensheng to mediate between them.

"Wensheng, I don't think I can stay here any longer, only to watch Mr. Jiang's authoritarian manner." Gao Pan stared at Wensheng.

"As fellowmen, we should spare no efforts to fight our external enemies together, rather than quarrel internally. As you all know, the Black Dragon Palace is a place of hierarchy, we should respect our leaders. Gao Pan, you should be nicer to Shaochuan. Plus, Shaochuan just wants to help you out in the fight with that guard." Wensheng folded the fan and smiled at Gao Pan.

As the most trusted man of the boss of the Black Dragon Palace, Wensheng enjoyed a high status and no one dared to disapprove his opinion, including Gao Pan.

Taking Wensheng's advice, Gao Pan stepped closer to Shaochuan and urged him to spit out his words. Therefore, Shaochuan selectively narrated what happened to him yesterday, mainly focusing on Xu Yi's tactful personality.

"Haha...I'm afraid you should blame yourself, rather than having a grudge against that guard. Man, you're old and you've lost your enthusiasm as well as your aspirations. That's why the White Horse Palace has been stagnant under your leadership. For me, I really don't care who Yi Xu is. As long as he is in the realm of the forged body, I'm confident in defeating him. Besides, I still have my soul-splitting spear, if push comes to shove..." Gao Pan sneered.

"Oh, right, I almost forget to mention, look at this glittering gold cassock, it's a reward from the big boss. Haha, I swear I'll twist Yi Xu's head off!" Gao Pan showed off the cassock, that was bestowed upon him by the boss of the Black Dragon Palace.

"Gao Pan, though I believe in you without a shadow of a doubt, we have to prepare for the worst, right? It has been several years since the last peak state fight in Guanan. You should be aware, that the popularity of this fight is unprecedented, as it has become the major conversational topic among the citizens of Guanan. The trigger of this fight was being hyped to the extent that the Black Dragon Palace almost became the laughingstock..." Wensheng took in a deep breath, before he let it out furiously.

Out of panic, Shaochuan knelt down on one leg, "I know it's all my fault. I'm not a qualified father. My son... He is the black sheep of our Black Dragon Palace. Please tell the big boss, that I'm prepared to accept any punishment."

Looking at the frightened Shaochuan, Gao Pan chuckled to himself. But Wensheng stepped forward and helped Shaochuan up, "You're right. Your son is the one to blame, but he's already dead. Right now, we have to focus our attention on Yi Xu and make sure that he doesn't leave the arena alive! Gao Pan, you're bearing the heavy responsibility to regain our reputation. You must win! Otherwise...Hehe, the big boss has even betted 100,000 gold coins on you!"



## Chapter 49 – The Grand Arena

Shortly after Wensheng finished his words, both Shaochuan and Gao Pan were stunned by the huge amount of money the Magnate had betted on this fight. They stood there with utterly pale faces.

With 100,000 gold coins, one could hire a cultivator who had already reached the peak state of an ocean of qi.

Excluding staff salary and other expenditures, the annual revenue of the Black Dragon Palace stood at merely 10,000 gold coins on average, which meant, that it took them ten full years to accumulate 100,000 gold coins!

“Gao Pan, do you now understand why the Magnate conferred this golden cassock to you? It was bought from the Gold Refinement Palace, at the price of 2,000 gold coins.” Wensheng kindly warned Gao Pan. Despite the fact that he had full confidence in Gao Pan’s fighting experience, he wasn’t 100% sure about who would survive in the end. After all, Xu Yi was also a cultivator in the peak state of a forged body.

The Black Dragon Palace couldn’t afford any disrepute anymore. Xu Yi’s story of killing the young lord of the White Horse Palace, the subdivision of the Black Dragon Palace, had already been quite sensational throughout Guanan. They wouldn’t allow themselves to lose face yet again, otherwise they would really become the laughingstock of all of Guanan.

“I swear I’ll complete this mission and behead that bastard!” Gao Pan clenched his fists, while the cracking of his knuckles could be clearly heard.

“Great! I bet you won’t dice with death.” Wensheng replied with satisfaction. He then reached into his pocket and took out a black box, the size of a matchbox. In the box there was a specially-designed silver ring, in the center of which a delicately-sculptured snake was curled up.

“This ring is also bestowed upon you, by the Magnate. You should use it as a concealed weapon, in case of an emergency. Look, here is the trigger, touch the head of the snake with the strength of your palm, and then it will protrude a green sting from the mouth of the snake, which was plucked from a 100-years old Green Queen Bee. This sting is rather tough and sharp, whenever it pokes into flesh, it will inject poison into it. Usually, a wild beast will immediately fall down, after only a single dose of this poison. For those below the ocean of qi stage, this weapon is lethal. However, even those who’re beyond the ocean of qi stage, would shed away from this attack.” Wensheng proudly explained its functions.

Unexpectedly, with the help of the strength exerted from his palm, the head of the snake shot out a long and thin sting. It went straight through the edge of Gao Pan’s golden cassock and then flew to the corner, until it finally stabbed into a bronze column.

The golden cassock was like a beancurd, easily poked through by the sting. The quickness and unpredictability of the attack was another advantage, as even for Gao Pan it was impossible to completely dodge this attack.

Taking the sting out of the bronze column, Wensheng stepped forward, in order to show the look of the sting to Shaochuan and Gao Pan.

In Wensheng's palm, the sting shortened to only one third of the length of a needle. It was as thin as the fine hair of a human, with a jade-green color.

After the demonstration, Wensheng bent the sting into an arch and gingerly pushed it back into the mouth of the sculptured snake, before he tucked the ring into Gao Pan's hands, "This ring will guarantee your safety, but remember, only use it when it is absolutely necessary. You know, the sting is a consumable, once it enters into the flesh and releases its poison, it will be useless. It costs 1,000 gold coins for a single sting! Although our Magnate is always generous, you'd better use these weapons efficiently and wisely."

"Generous?" Gao Pao highly doubted this, however, he firmly nodded to hide his suspicion.

The Magnate of the Black Dragon Palace was stingy with money, everyone knew that. After the fight, he would take all his weapons back from Gao Pan, including the golden cassock and the ring.

Gao Pan was determined to refrain himself from using the sting, unless his life was in danger. Otherwise, even if he won the fight, the Magnate would be greatly angered.

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Through the narrow channel, the sand in the crystal sandglass kept flowing from the top section to the bottom section. Xu Yi had been staring at it for quite a while.

Since his departure from General Gao's room, Xu Yi was asked to stay in this room. When the sand in the sandglass had fully filled the bottom part, the fight would start.

Finally, the last grain of the sand dropped to the bottom part and, almost immediately, the door opened, "It's time to go, stand up and follow me!" Another man in green clothing led Xu Yi through numerous aisles and finally arrived at an elevator. Xu Yi was rather curious, as he looked around and tried to find out where the power-generator was. As soon as the elevator stopped, the man in green clothing continued to walk ahead until they reached another elevator.

Xu Yi was utterly befuddled by the mysterious way to the arena, as they had already lowered themselves by more than 150 meters.

- Di! Di! -

A signal sound came from the waist of the man in green clothing, before the elevator stopped a little bit and the man in green clothing got out and left, leaving Xu Yi alone. Soon, the elevator started back up, but this time it went upward.

To Xu Yi's surprise, unlike the previous elevator, the walls in this one stood still, as only the floor went upward.

Soon, Xu Yi saw that he had emerged on the stage of the arena! Several meters away from him, a man in a golden cassock rose from another elevator.

Their gazes locked on one another, as both Xu Yi and Gao Pan looked at each other.

Never in this lifetime, or even in the three-dimensional movies in his previous lifetime, had he ever seen such a grand arena.

The surface of the arena was paved by green slates, all made from the compound of heavy iron and diamonds. A layer of golden sand was applied to the slate, making it even more magnificent. The almost boundless arena was more like a place for the most untamed beasts to fight with each other.

The terrace stands were as high as mountains; they could accommodate millions of spectators. Waves of people swarmed into the stands, pushing and squeezing all the way through.

To ensure the visibility for each spectator, the designer of this arena had shaped the stands into a concave-convex form. Looking from afar, it looked like a giant serpent crouching on the ground.

However, with millions of spectators, the stands were built in high latitude. Looking from the highest point, the two candidates in the center of the arena were like two small dots.

In order to solve this problem, the Guanan Government had invited an innovative genius from the Gold Refinement Palace.

And this genius created a gigantic projector screen on each side of the

stands, exposing each movement of the candidates. This way, the spectator would certainly enjoy an accurate view of the fight.

In addition, to convey the sound of the fight to the ears of each and every spectator, the genius had placed multiple sound-gathering devices in the stands. Be it the “thud” of the colliding of the palms, or the smallest of noises of pulling out a sword, all would be heard.

## Chapter 50 – Despicable Me

The designer of the arena seemed to know no boundary of imagination. Xu Yi's view of architecture was refreshed to some extent, as he looked around, appreciating the magnificence of this arena.

At some point, Xu Yi's blood surged with enthusiasm, as he was proud to be encircled by millions of spectators. This also reminded him of the feeling in his previous life, when he was playing video games, leading hundreds of soldiers to storm a castle. Though the feelings were quite similar, this time, it was much more passionate and uncontrollable.

Admittedly, virtual reality games would certainly be overshadowed by a real arena, even without the millions of eyes locked on him. Xu Yi was filled with warm blood, which felt like it was about to explode.

Meanwhile, Gao Pan stood there befuddled as well as irritated by Xu Yi's impoliteness and complacency, since the latter simply indulged himself in picturing the glory he might obtain after the fight. Xu Yi didn't look at Gao Pan at all; instead, he kept observing his surroundings with great curiosity. More precisely, Xu Yi acted like a bumpkin, who had only just stepped into the big city, which made him dizzy and intoxicated. Right now, he seemed to have forgotten his mission in this arena, he was more like a sightseeing tourist.

- Dang! -

With the sound of a gong, the spectators stopped their noisy discussions, as they were awaiting the official announcement to mark the start of the fight.

Through the sound-gathering devices, the rules of this fight were conveyed to everyone. The rules were quite simple: weapons were allowed, tactics were allowed and the candidates held no responsibility for the death of the other during the fight.

As soon as the sound faded away, Xu Yi and Gao Pan glanced at each other.

Gao Pan stood there, holding his silver spear firmly in his hands. His big body was wrapped in the golden cassock, which gleamed brightly in the sunlight. Looking from afar, he was like a golden-armored immortal who had descended from the heavens. He furiously glared at Xu Yi, like a tiger ready to swoop onto its prey.

To the contrary, Xu Yi was kind of dwarfed by Gao Pan's appearance. He was scrawny, unkempt and poorly dressed. The only thing that distinguished himself, was his pair of sparkling eyes.

Judging from appearance alone, Gao Pan was more like a winner. When he waved the silver spear in his hands, deafening sounds rose up from the stands, as all of the spectators cheered for him.

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During his previous eight fights, the arenas were far from as grandiose as this one, the well-known Dragon Rising Arena.

In the earlier years, fights between cultivators in the peak state of a



forged body were frequent in Guanan. However, in recent years, with the decline of such fights, people started to attach more importance to them when they did occur.

Indeed, it was not simply a fight between Gao Pan and Xu Yi today, rather, it was a competition between the guards department and the Black Dragon Palace. The 100,000 gold coins that the latter had poured into the casino didn't only activate the slump casino market in Guanan, but also sucked in more spectators.

Due to the unprecedented popularity of this fight, the Guanan government had even decided to restart this long-unused Dragon Rising Arena.

...

Gao Pan was deeply intoxicated by the cheering from the millions of spectators that boomed in the air, as he almost forgot about Wensheng's warning – to fight a quick battle.

Gao Pan stood there, pressing the tip of his spear against the ground. As per the usual procedures, candidates would introduce their weapons to each other before they fought. However, when Gao Pan was about to open his mouth, Xu Yi took the initiative.

Xu Yi spurted to the center of the arena, waving his arms to the spectators from all directions.

"Calm down everybody, and listen to me!" Xu Yi's abrupt shout confused everyone, as there had never been a candidate who had behaved like this.

Out of curiosity, millions of spectators all turned their eyes on Xu Yi, in an attempt to hear what this candidate would say next.

"I want to ask you guys, did any of you bet on me? If you did, congratulations in advance! You'll definitely win money from the casino. Now, I want to find out where you are, my supporters. Would you please wave your hands, and cheer for me?" Xu Yi shamelessly demanded.

- Boooo! -

On hearing Xu Yi's unexpected, yet emboldened speech, most of the spectators booed from the stands, taking it as a cold and sick joke. At the same time, Gao Pan was also shocked by his opponent, as his silver spear almost slipped out of his hands. He felt so disgusted by Xu Yi's blind confidence, as if he had just eaten a rotten egg.

However, there were several rows of spectators who stood up and violently waved their hands in the air, cheering for Xu Yi in an almost hysterical way.

Even if there was only 1% out of the millions of spectators who supported him, the sound of their cheering would still make an uproar. Even some neutral spectators followed suit and joined in the loud cheering.

The reaction from the stands surprised Gao Pan, he even felt slightly envious of Xu Yi, "I've obtained eight consecutive wins. I certainly have more fans than that bastard. If I shout to the spectators, there might be millions of spectators who'll cheer for me..."

Gao Pan imagined the waves of jubilation, that would sound out from the stands. This left him so thrilled, that even his bladder became somewhat swollen, which made him want to pee. The exuberant passion from the stands definitely turned him on. Thus, he stood squarely, trying to summon up his supporters.

However, hardly had Gao Pan spoken a word, or he was hit by a strong force, so he intentionally bent his waist in an attempt to escape. However, his silver spear slipped away from his hands in the process.

The previous bravado was just part of Xu Yi's sneak attack strategy. He had calculated that the only chance for him to succeed was to take the initiative in this fight and attack Gao Pan's weakness by using his own advantage.

The advantage of Xu Yi included his nimble responsiveness, speed, and formidable strength. However, he was extremely lacking in the department of practical techniques. The only technique he had practiced, the Crazy Ox Palm, was just a low-grade technique, which was inefficient in real combat.

Undoubtedly, the key to win from Gao Pan was to attack him unexpectedly, and fight with him at close range, preventing Gao Pan from using any techniques.

The silver spear in Gao Pan's hands, was Xu Yi's first target. Without the spear, it was much easier for Xu Yi to maneuver around in the arena. Despite the fact that they were both in the peak state of a forged body, the chance for the armless Xu Yi to win from the equipped Gao Pan was rather slim. Plus, Gao Pan's skills with the spear were matchless in the surrounding cultivating world. All the above explained why Xu Yi was so desperate to deter him from using his spear; otherwise, Xu Yi would be doomed.

Xu Yi had intentionally gotten closer to Gao Pan, when he was walking around the stage to arouse the cheering of the spectators. Knowing that Gao Pan had also been influenced by the passionate atmosphere, Xu Yi figured that it'd be the perfect time to launch a surprise attack.

Nevertheless, as an experienced arena fighter, Gao Pan escaped the approaching force almost by instinct. He successfully moved his head away, yet he slightly loosened his hands in surprise, letting his silver spear slip away from him.

- Boooo! -

The spectators were all provoked by Xu Yi's despicable attack, as they started to shout and roar in defiance. It seemed as if the thunder-like and feverish noise was going to swallow Xu Yi and crash him into smoke and ashes.

## Chapter 51 – God of War

Dirty tricks weren't uncommon in such life and death battles, and people wouldn't consider this to be despicable. However, they never saw a candidate like Xu Yi, who launched his sneak attack by cheating the millions of spectators.

"Shameless!"

"Despicable!"

"Insidious!"

Waves of curses erupted from the stands, accompanied by the throwing of gold coins, bottles, lunch-boxes, blusher containers, jewel cases and more...The enraged spectators cast everything at their disposal towards Xu Yi.

Gao Pan was hit by a mixed feeling of indignation and grief, as he felt rather itchy to howl out his negative emotions. Actually, as an experienced fighter, he could understand Xu Yi's sneak attack, but he couldn't tolerate Xu Yi's interruption when he was about to summon up millions of spectators to cheer for him. He had been so eager to experience that triumphant feeling.

Certainly, Xu Yi wouldn't care much about Gao Pan's feeling. The only thing he was interested in right now was that, anyone who would take the initiative, would lead the direction of this fight.

Nevertheless, Gao Pan, an eight-time consecutive winner, wasn't this easy to defeat. Despite his panic, he still managed to throw his defenses up in a mere second.

"Nasty villain, you dare to sneak attack me! I will make you die like a dog!" Gao Pan tilted his chin, giving vent to a torrent of abuses.

With his formidable willpower, Xu Yi wasn't distracted by the abusing and the throwing of objects by the spectators, on the contrary, this spurred him to fight even fiercer. Therefore, he attentively focused on his fist and waved them in Gao Pan's direction.

Receiving no reply from Xu Yi, Gao Pan's anger hit the roof, "Bastard, you plan to compete with me for strength? Bring it on!"

Judging from the sizes of their bodies, Gao Pan was twice the size of Xu Yi. He lived up to his reputation as a heavyweight fighter in the cultivating world.

In his eight previous fights, Gao Pan had only used the silver spear for three of them, while most of the time he had merely used his pair of fists. Now, he furiously wielded his fists in the air, glaring at Xu Yi with eyes full hostility. The spectators couldn't help but shout, "Punch him to death! Punch him to death!"

Gao Pan was in a state of ecstasy, when he heard the millions of his supporters shouting and cursing at Xu Yi.

- Boom! -

Hardly had Gao Pan realised what had happened, or his chest was hit by Xu Yi's palm. The cracking sound inside his chest indicated that he had just been hit by an immense power. However, Gao Pan stood steadily, not even so much as quivering.

Xu Yi was taken aback by Gao Pan's overwhelming defensiveness, but quickly figured out that the golden cassock, that was being worn by Gao Pan, must be something unusual.

"Despicable roach, look, you cannot even cause an injury on me. Now, it's my turn!"

With a thud, Gao Pan waved his fists and exclaimed, "Armor-Breaking Fist!"

Amazed by the momentum of the fist, Xu Yi decided not to directly launch a counterattack, instead he chose to dodge Gao Pan's attack.

- Boom! -

Eventually, the fist landed on the iron-made floor, leaving a shallow dent on the surface.

Cheering immediately exploded from the stands!

Gao Pan kept moving forward, in an attempt to retrieve his silver spear. However, hardly had he made any progress, or Xu Yi jumped in front of

him, deterring his way towards the spear. Xu Yi threw another punch towards Gao Pan, but the cassock was almost unbreakable.

In response, Gao Pan exerted the Armor-Breaking Fist for the second time. Luckily, Xu Yi successfully escaped from it once again. Strangely, both of them seemed to be locked in a tangled fight, repeating the same movements time and time again. Whenever Gao Pan lifted his feet towards his silver spear, Xu Yi would stop him and steer the fighting scene away from the spear.

Never had Gao Pan encountered such a roguish fight, he felt extremely depressed and annoyed by Xu Yi's repeated attacks and defenses.

The spectators were further irritated by Xu Yi, they kept shouting, "Yi Xu, shame on you!"

Whereas, Xu Yi was almost ignorant to the reactions from the stands, because he'd rather lose his face than his life.

The time-consuming way of attacking had severely damaged Gao Pan's physical strength, as the Armor-Breaking Fist required a great amount of power. Yet the stubborn Gao Pan decided to fight with Xu Yi this way, until there was a winner.

"Motherfucker! You want to exchange fists with me? Let's do it! Whoever quits in this fight due to a lack of strength, will be the loser!" Gao Pan challenged Xu Yi in an unfriendly voice.

Xu Yi nimbly waved his neck, before he threw his fist towards the chest



of Gao Pan.

"Here we go!" Xu Yi shouted.

- Bang! -

- Boom! -

Both Gao Pan and Xu Yi were simultaneously hit by each other. Gao Pan's golden cassock began to give out a shirking sound. While Xu Yi maintained his vigor throughout the fight, totally unaffected by the numerous fists he exerted.

"You're wearing protective clothing, aren't you?" Gao Pan shot a suspicious look at Xu Yi, wondering how Xu Yi could stand the force of the Armor-Breaking Fist.

It suddenly struck Gao Pan, that this might be a trick: Xu Yi's mind-boggling speed provided him the chance to exchange short-ranged attacks, while his protective clothing prevented him from being injured. By dragging Gao Pan in this fight of endurance, Xu Yi aimed to take advantage of his strength and attack Gao Pan's weakness.

However, Gao Pan was not frightened by realising this; instead, he became more and more confident in defeating Xu Yi. He considered that, only incompetent cultivators would use dirty tricks to try and win their fights. Besides, he firmly believed, that any tricks would prove in vain against genuine power.

As for the protective clothing, the low-grade cassock costed 2,000 gold coins, it would certainly defend against Xu Yi's attack. As for the fists, Gao Pan was convinced that, in the peak state of a forged body, he should be the number one.

They continued fighting - sometimes palms collided with each other, while sometimes they landed on the other's chest. It was simply a competition of willpower and strength, which shocked many of the spectators. Without any fancy techniques, this fight became more and more barbaric, like two wild beasts were wrestling with each other, trying to determine who would get the prey.

After hundreds of rounds of fists, the spectators gradually got upset; they stood up cheering for Gao Pan, "God of War! Winner Gao!"

The approval rating of Gao Pan was multiple times larger than Xu Yi's. On one hand, everyone was familiar with Gao Pan, who had already proved himself in various fights. While on the other hand, the sneak attack of Xu Yi had discouraged many people from supporting him again. Even those beautiful, yet innocent girls, who had originally cheered for him, had changed their minds.

Under the sunshine, Gao Pan's golden cassock reflected the light, gleaming with clinquant rays. Meanwhile, hooray sounding screams kept rising up from the stands, as Gao Pan was idolised as the God of War.

Yet, deep inside, Gao Pan was fretful and terrified. His strength was almost used up, while Xu Yi was still waving his fists agilely towards him.

“God of War? I don’t even care about this shitty title.” He thought to himself, because he was too exhausted to carry on.

## Chapter 52 – The Green Sting

Gao Pan forced himself to continue to fight, even though his tower of confidence had almost completely collapsed.

Not long ago, he had claimed that he would he would win from his opponent by sheer strength. Because, with the help of both the golden cassock and the mighty Armor-Breaking Fist, he was utterly convinced that he'd be able carry on until the end of the fight.

Be that as it may, after being attacked by hundreds of fists, he felt dizzy and exhausted from head to toe.

What surprised him the most, was the strength that was exerted from the seemingly emaciated Xu Yi. He even wondered what kind of material Xu Yi was made of.

What made things worse, was that he had already vowed that anyone who quit in the middle of the fight, would be considered the loser. Now, he endlessly regretted his passionate, yet stupid commitment.

However, the spoken words were like the pouring out of water, there was no way to get it back.

Ironically, the millions of spectators had titled him as the god of war. Yet, their trust only made Gao Pan feel nervous and upset.

If he quit in the middle, he'd not only be a loser, but it'd also affect his

credibility in Guanan.

- Boom! Boom! Boom! -

With three successive attacks, Gao Pan spurted backwards, keeping a distance of roughly ten meters from Xu Yi. Now, he deliberately went to the place where he had dropped his silver spear. However, he was still thirty odd meters away from the spear.

Watching this sudden movement, the spectators were screaming out, making a long and ear-piercing sound. A second later, the sound abruptly came to an end.

Gao Pan began dangling, as he could no longer stand steady. He felt as if there were hundreds of bees buzzing inside his brain.

When he had to choose between face and life, Gao Pan chose the latter, which was quite similar to Xu Yi's choice on this matter. The difference was, that Xu Yi didn't care about others' opinion, as he had become indifferent to the way this world works, while Gao Pan still adhered to the dignity of a cultivator, which made him blush from head to toe.

Xu Yi glanced at Gao Pan, feeling satisfied with his own strategy – attacking the opponent's weakness by using his own advantage. It was within his expectation that Gao Pan would lose due to exhaustion, but he didn't expect that Gao Pan would quit so quickly.

The immense power of his physical strength and soul, were two major advantages that helped Xu Yi out in this fight. Which was something that

Gao Pan didn't even know about.

Each time Xu Yi landed his fists on Gao Pan's golden cassock, there came a grating noise. Xu Yi knew, that under the hundreds of mechanical attacks, the cassock was on the verge of cracking.

Gao Pan stood there, like a spent bullet. Given his lack of strength, even if he picked up the spear, he wouldn't be able to reverse the way this fight was going.

Suddenly, in order to gather more strength, Xu Yi stomped his left foot on the ground, leaving a dent on the surface. He then rushed towards Gao Pan.

At this moment, the stands burst out in a frustrated uproar, including all kinds of noises – hissing, abusing, wailing and shrieking. It was like the sounds came from the horrendous inferno.

The fact that Gao Pan had unexpectedly ran away, was absolutely a heavy blow for most of his supporters. At the beginning of the fight, they believed that Xu Yi's sneak attack was a sign of incompetence, which made them feel reassured in Gao Pan's ability to win this fight.

At the same time, during their prolonged fight, Xu Yi had kept almost completely silent, leaving an impression of cowardice. Whereas, Gao Pan howled like a lion, every time he exerted his fists. All of these clues led the spectators to the belief, that Gao Pan was quite easily dealing with Xu Yi.

More than 100,000 people had betted their money on Gao Pan, they could make a big fortune if Gao Pan won. Some of them even invested all of their savings into this gamble!

Despite Gao Pan running away, some of the supporters still bore hopes for Gao Pan, as they didn't want to face the reality of losing their hard-earned money. They thought that Gao Pan might use this as a tactic to relax Xu Yi's vigilance, and the situation would probably turn around. However, Gao Pan had vowed to the spectators that the first quitter in the battle of strength, would automatically be the loser. This brutal fact dashed their last string of hope.

When these greedy gamblers thought of the money they had invested and when they then looked at Gao Pan's movements, they felt that their nerves were being greatly provoked by him. If Gao Pan was defeated, their money would be down the drain!

Again, numerous amounts of objects were thrown towards the arena, like a meteoric shower. Some of the spectators even jumped off their seats, screaming nonsense and behaving like lunatics. The stands were in complete chaos, if it wasn't for the protective screening that separated them from the main stage, it'd be a disaster.

Gao Pan coldly watched what happened on the stands, as all of his attention was anchored on the ring on his left hand – the ring with the green sting.

Under such circumstances, the ring was Gao Pan's last resort. The silver spear was not an advantage to him anymore, because it required great strength to use it. So he had given up on the spear and had turned to his final trump card, the ring.

Although he had promised Wensheng, that he wouldn't use this expensive ring randomly, it had now become his final hope to win from Xu Yi. He deliberately got closer to the silver spear, distracting Xu Yi from discovering his real intentions. All he needed right now, was a second of absentmindedness from Xu Yi, so that he could secretly trigger the ring.

Unfortunately, the ring on his hand was worn in the opposite direction – the mouth of the snake was facing inward! Originally, he believed that the golden cassock and the silver spear were enough to help him win this fight. Thus he had put the ring on carelessly, not noticing its direction.

Since the ring was a concealed weapon, Gao Pan kept a certain distance from Xu Yi, and secretly turned the ring around. Once the direction of the ring was corrected, he let out a long sigh of relief.

He then staggered towards the silver spear, trying to mislead Xu Yi's predictions.

Thirty meters, ten meters, three meters...

As he got closer and closer towards the spear, the noises from the stands gradually calmed down. The spectators regained their confidence in Gao Pan, as the spear was almost within reach.

As expected, Gao Pan started to stretch his large hands out towards the silver spear.

- Hoooo! -



A torrent of exclamations from the stands broke the silence.

Not disrupted by the sounds, Gao Pan and Xu Yi cautiously made their movements at this key moment. They were so wrapped up in this fight, that they felt as if they were the last two beings between heaven and earth.

Suddenly, Gao Pan turned around, instead of picking up the spear. He realised that Xu Yi was only ten meters away from him; it was time to use his concealed weapon.

Now or never!

Gao Pan calculated that Xu Yi would get closer to him when he turned back. At that time, he just needed to trigger the mouth of the snake and the fight would be over.

Within roughly three meters, the speed of the green sting would be too overwhelming, even immortals couldn't manage to duck away at that time.

## Chapter 53 – Game Over

- Shoo! -

The moment when Gao Pan turned around, his face was unexpectedly hit by a multi-layered cloth shoe.

Hardly had Gao Pan realised what had happened to him, or his ring-wearing finger was twisted off by Xu Yi. Also, almost simultaneously, Xu Yi punched Gao Pan's head with his mighty palm.

With the sudden blow, Gao Pan fell down, nearly paralyzed. Looking at the powerless Gao Pan, Xu Yi straightened his back, and tucked Gao Pan's finger into his waist pocket.

The whole stands were now in an awkward silence.

"Why don't you just kill me?" Gao Pan lied on the floor, as he requested Xu Yi to end his life.

"I hold no hatred for you, why should I kill you?" Xu Yi replied inadvertently, as he took his shoe back.

The strength of his previous palm attack on Gao Pan's face was far from lethal; Xu Yi simply intended to extinguish Gao Pan's final defenses.

Just as Xu Yi had told General Gao, he wasn't some murderous maniac. He would only killed those, who truly deserved to die.

The Zhou family, for example, was a family feud for generations. Xu Yi added them to the killing list simply out of revenge. The man in black clothing, or the young lord of the White Horse Palace, they had been bullying innocent civilians for years. The trigger of his death, was that he insulted Elder Mu and threatened the life of Autumn. Xu Yi could not stand for such evil doings; so he had killed them in the name of justice.

As for Gao Pan, it was a totally different story. They didn't know each other prior to this fight. As a cultivator, who had both reached the peak state of a forged body, Xu Yi actually respected Gao Pan. He felt no hostility towards this guy.

"Even if you didn't kill me, someone else will!" Gao Pan was crystal clear that the big boss of the Black Dragon Palace wouldn't forgive his failure, given the 100,000 gold coins he had betted on him!

"I cannot convince myself to kill you. There's simply no reason to do so. Well, it's none of my business if you will be killed by someone else." Xu Yi replied as he picked up the silver spear. He seemed to vacillate, not knowing if he could strip off Gao Pan's golden cassock. Eventually, he gave up on this idea, because he didn't want to cross his moral bottom line.

"Last question, how... how did you know the ring was actually a weapon? Please tell me, otherwise I won't be able to die without regrets." Gao Pan stammered out.

"Senses!" Xu Yi replied with only one word.

When Gao Pan ran towards the spear, at the beginning, Xu Yi predicted that the spear was Gao Pan's last resort. However, he had sensed that there was a slowdown movement in the process, though it was very hard to spot. He then deliberately calmed down to reach the Fighting Samadhi State. By closing both his eyes and ears, Xu Yi sensed all of the details in his surroundings.

He clearly saw Gao Pan deliberately turn his ring. At the moment of life and death, Gao Pan focused his attention on a ring, rather than picking up the nearby spear. The only explanation could be, that the ring was a concealed weapon. In such an urgent situation, Xu Yi had no choice but to twist off Gao Pan's finger.

"Senses? Oh, right. What else could it be. Thank you for telling me this." Gao Pan's voice was too faint to hear clearly. All of a sudden, he closed his eyes and twisted his own neck off.

Strangely, Gao Pan died with his mouth half opened, smiling with satisfaction, as if he was sarcastically saying: "My life was worth 100,000 gold coins!"

The death of Gao Pan, as well as the mixed cheering and abusing from the spectators, didn't affect Xu Yi's mood at all. He kept being sober throughout the fight.

- Dang! -

The sound of the gong officially marked the end of this fight between Xu Yi and Gao Pan.

"Now, I announce that Yi Xu, the guard from the Hibiscus Town, is the winner of this fight! In addition, the Black Dragon Palace has invited Yi Xu to another fight. The date of the next fight is scheduled to be in seven days from now."

On hearing the announcement, Xu Yi abruptly fell down with a thud, vomiting a mouthful of blood.

.....

It was almost the middle of the night, and the bright moon overshadowed all the stars. The gardenias were elegantly waving in the breeze, giving out a full-bodied arrogance. The smell of the gardenias gently blew into the house through the window.

Since Xu Yi had fainted in the arena, he was immediately carried to the nearest clinic. The diagnosis said that Xu Yi's inner organs had been damaged, which would take a couple of days to rehabilitate.

At the same time, Qinghua asked around to find where his boss was. Finally, he had arrived at the clinic. Seeing his boss's bad condition, he had decocted two bowls of herbal medicine for Xu Yi, hoping that this would accelerate the latter's recuperation. Being afraid of the unstable condition of Xu Yi, Qinghua left his boss in the clinic under the watch of the doctors.

As soon as Qinghua left the clinic, he was busy employing new servants for his boss. After everything was settled, Qinghua rented a large cart and went back to the clinic. It was almost at dusk, when Xu Yi was carried back home.

Qinghua had hired two handymen into the house and the three of them moved Xu Yi from the cart into his bed. After closing the door, Qinghua hastily went back to the two handymen, as if there was something urgent happening.

In the bedroom, Xu Yi turned over the quilt and sat on his bed. The breeze from the window was comfortably cool, yet Xu Yi's heart was furiously burning with anger.

Actually, Xu Yi managed a fake faint in the arena. He was injured internally, but not to the extent to fall down unconsciously.

When Qinghua arrived at the clinic, he bustled about taking care of him; Xu Yi was truly touched by his sincerity. However, when he was left alone in the clinic, where the charlatan fed him bowls of bitter medicines, he became mad at Qinghua.

People who benefited from the casino kept flooding into the clinic. These people came to see Xu Yi with a hidden agenda - they intended to know Xu Yi's chance of success in the next fight, rather than being concerned about his health.

He had to maintain the fake faint for hours, or else his previous "performance" would have been in vain. In order to keep the cat in the bag, Xu Yi restrained himself from jumping up and kicking away those greedy gamblers from him.

Again, Xu Yi was left in the bedroom alone. Qinghua hurried outside immediately after he arranged the handymen to carry Xu Yi on the bed.

Now, Xu Yi was hungry and thirsty, and there was nobody nearby to take care of him.

At this moment, Xu Yi heard some noises coming from outside. So he deliberately lay down again, hiding himself in the quilt.

The door was pushed open, and then closed quietly. It was Autumn! She sneaked into Xu Yi's bedroom, and crawled onto his bed, with the help of a stool.

Autumn slowly moved to Xu Yi's head, stroking his forehead. She stared at Xu Yi for quite a long time, frequently fluttering her eyelashes. After a while, she put her snow-white and round arm near Xu Yi's mouth. She looked rather determined when she made this movement. She then whispered to Xu Yi, "Uncle Xu, please wake up. You promised me to buy me a lot of chicken drumsticks."

"You're such a lovely foodie! Haha, No wonder you're always so hungry." Xu Yi suddenly opened his eyes and took Autumn in his arms.

"Oh... Uncle, you woke up, you woke up..." Autumn got a fright at first, but, after a while, she began giggling.

"Shoo, be quiet. I'm a fake patient. Don't let anyone else know this." Xu Yi whispered, as he muffled Autumn's mouth.

"Uncle, you're so tricky." Autumn yawned, "I'm so sleepy. I'll go to bed right now. Tomorrow morning, I'll eat steamed meat dumplings, Osmanthus cake, chicken drumsticks and sweet soybean milk..."

“Alright, I will buy it all for you. Go and tell your grandpa that I’m ok, before you go to bed.” Xu Yi dropped her from his arm.

Several minutes later, the door was opened again. This time, it was Qinghua, holding a gigantic bowl in his hands. The smell of bitterness filled the air, even before he had stepped into the room.



Dear Readers!

We are regretful to inform you that we have decided to drop the translation of 'I Came From the Mortal World'. At the start we hoped that the author would qualitatively improve his work, as it was riddled with inconsistencies and a weird story progression. Sadly, as we're now 50 chapters in, we've yet to see an improve and are afraid that this won't come. For those of you who have accompanied us through these 53 chapters, we are really grateful. But for now, we regrettably inform you, that chapter 53 will be our final chapter.

In order to optimize your reading experience, we plan to fully utilize our time and energy in more attractive novels. We promise that we, Xianxiaworld, will continue our best efforts to translate more and more reader-friendly novels.

On a final, happier, note, our translator and editor from I Came From the Mortal World will stick together and start the translation of a new novel. We hope to see you all over there and continue to support us! The new novel that will be translated is 'Beast Piercing The Heavens'.

'Beast Piercing The Heavens'

Link: <http://www.xianxiaworld.net/Beast-Piercing-The-Heavens/>

Thank you for your continued support! We really appreciate it!

